

Investi GATORS



Heist and Seek



New York Times-Bestselling Author
John Patrick Green

Investi GATORS



Heist and Seek

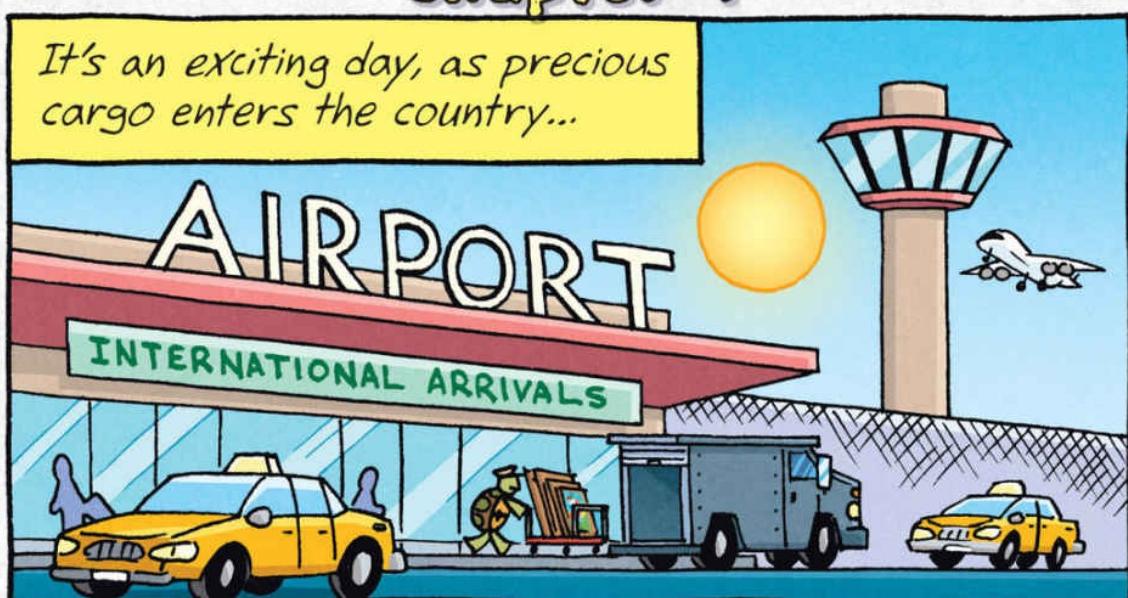
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First Second

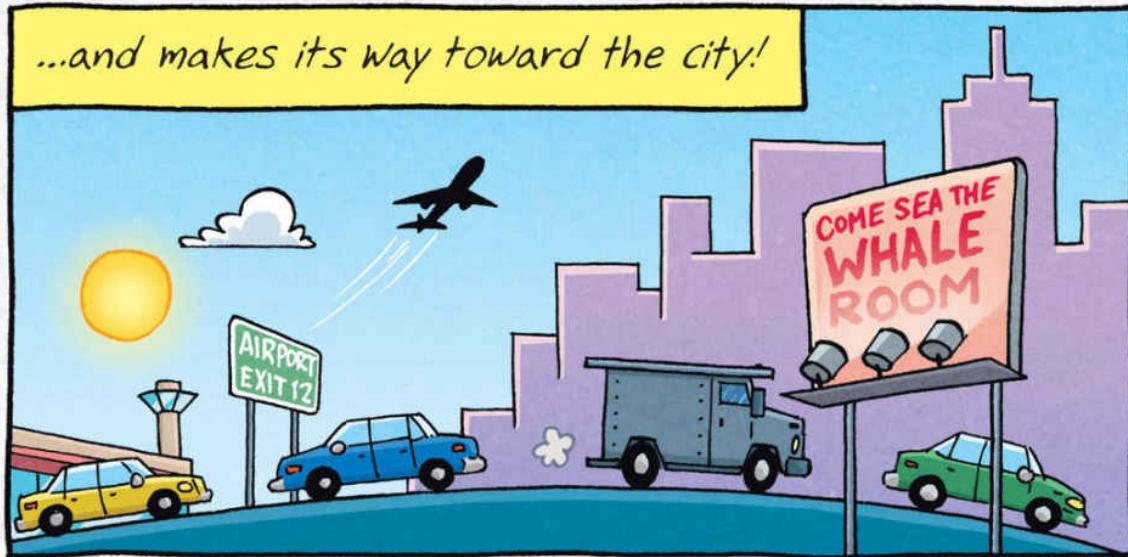


Chapter 1

It's an exciting day, as precious cargo enters the country...



...and makes its way toward the city!



Under guard by an elite team...

YAWN!

Light's green!

...the van weaves through the streets...

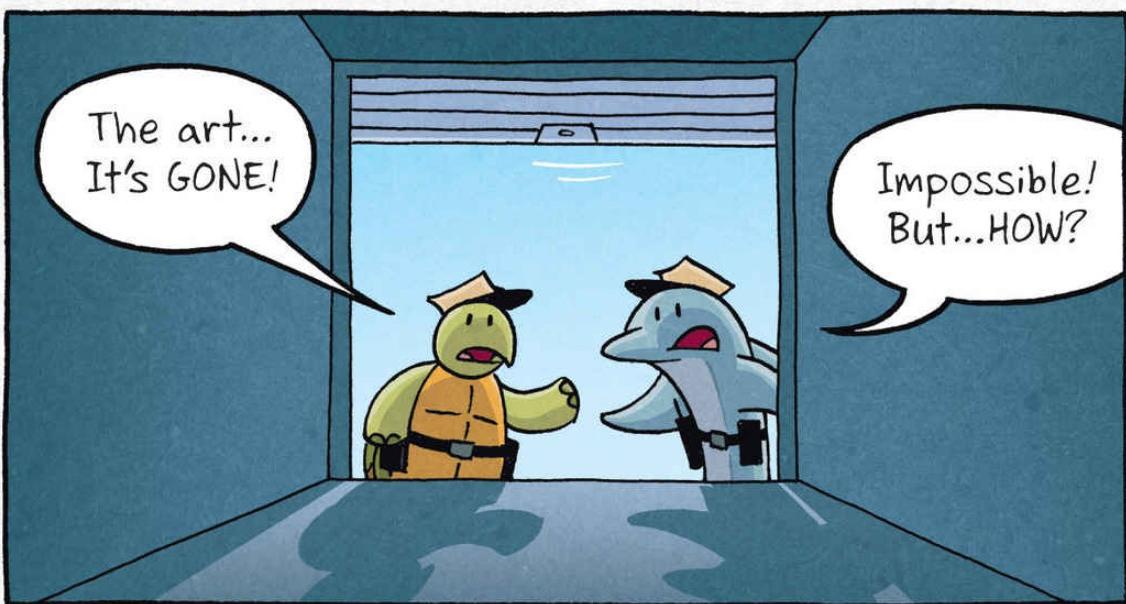
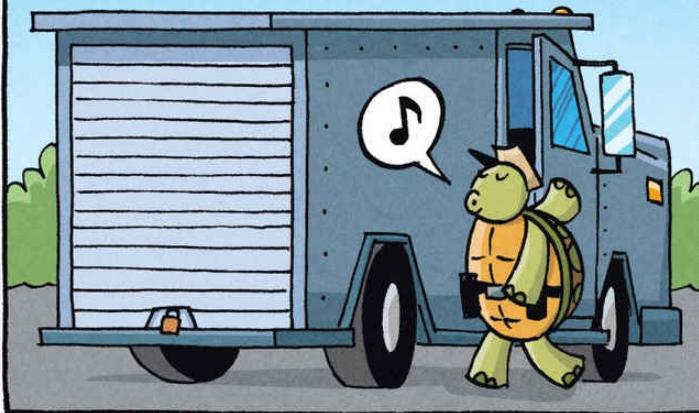
WAREHOUSE? THERE, HOUSE!

U-HIDE'M
SELF STORAGE

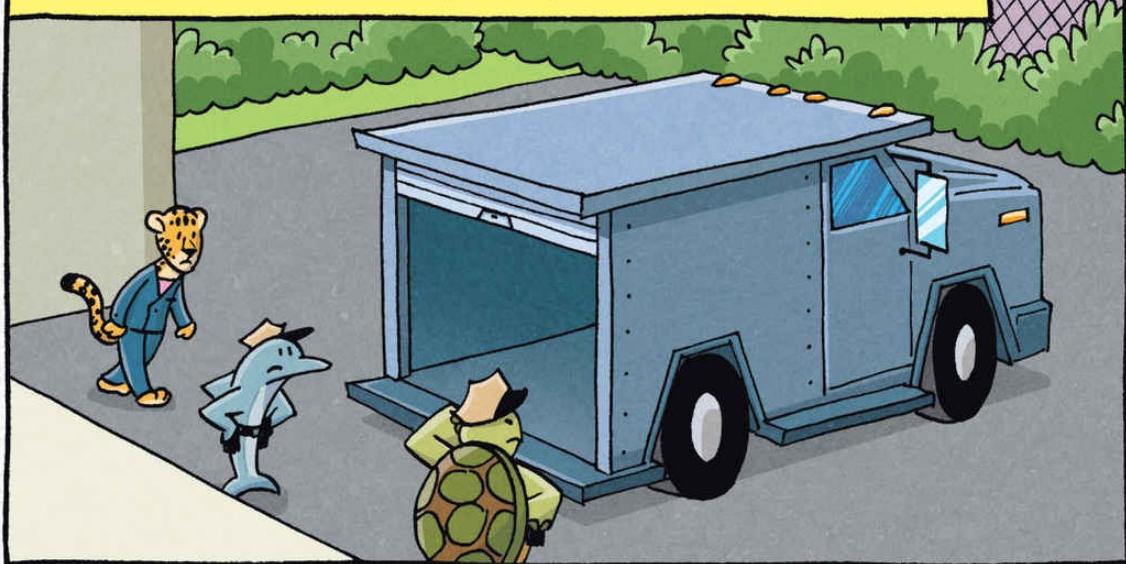
...until it reaches its final destination.

ART MUSEUM

But when it's time to remove the contents...



Who can solve this mystery? This is a job for...



DETECTIVE COLE!



With the city's **best detective** my hostage, the mayor has no choice but to pay my ransom, or I'll turn this town into dust!



Well, not dust. Sugar. Because I like to eat sugar.



You may be a **weevil**...but you don't have to be **EVIL**! Listen to me—



To **YOU**? The only leafy green I listen to is **COLD, HARD CASH!**

NO ONE CAN STOP ME! Not even the—

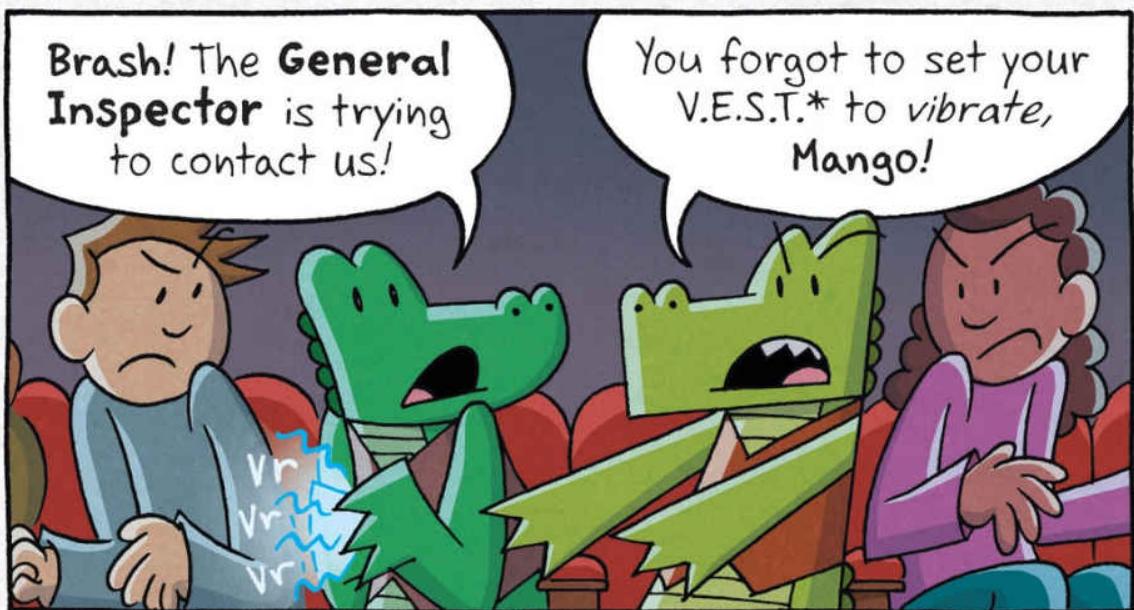


INVESTIGATORS!

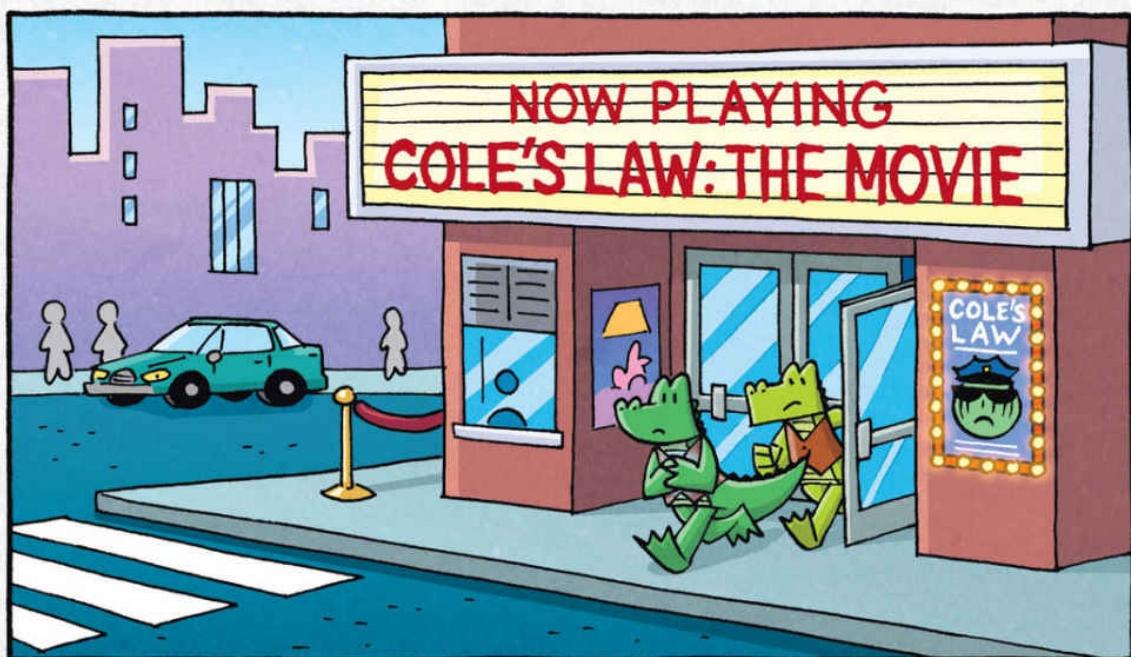


Brash! The **General Inspector** is trying to contact us!

You forgot to set your V.E.S.T.* to vibrate, Mango!

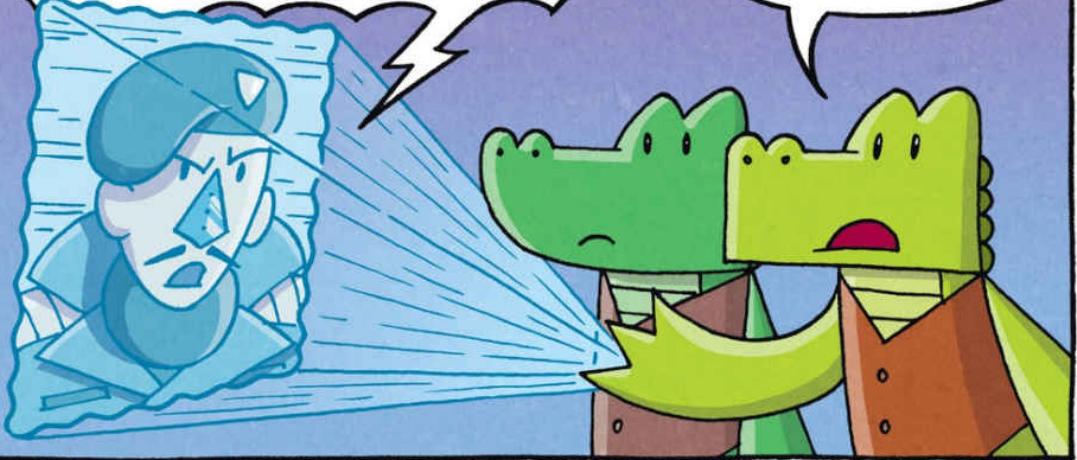


*Very Exciting Spy Technology



Agents! You're urgently needed at the city Art Museum!

The art museum? What is it?



It's a big building where people can look at art.

I know what a museum is, Mango. I mean what's the emergency!



An armored car was transporting priceless works of art to the museum for an upcoming exhibit. But when it arrived, the paintings were nowhere to be seen!

Oh, no!

And art is MEANT to be seen!





...right after we watch the rest of
COLE'S LAW: THE MOVIE!



WHAT? No, Mango!
We have a CASE
to solve!

Yeah, well, so does
Detective Cole!



GLARE!

Ugh,
FINE.

But if anyone spoils the
ending for me, I'm going
to be **VERY GRUMPY!**

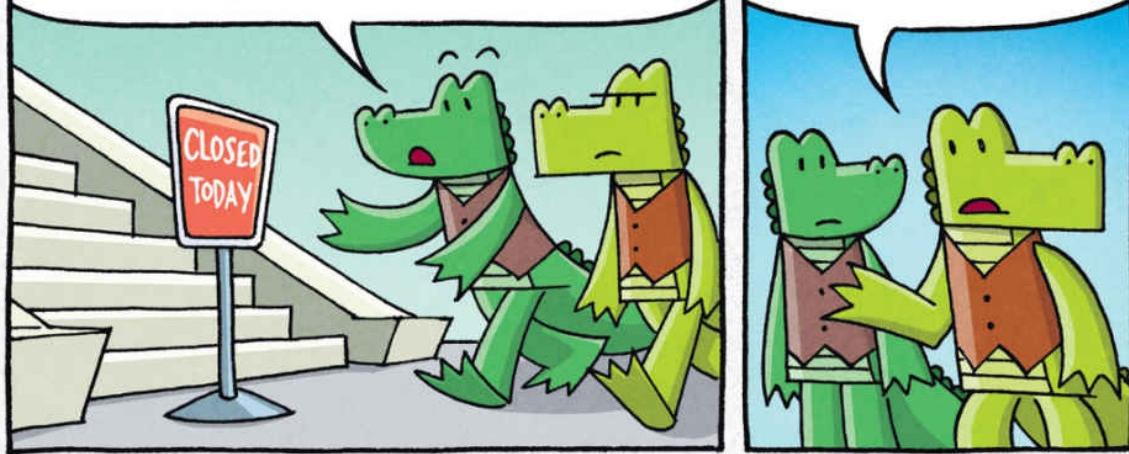


Chapter 2



Dang, it's closed. Guess we'll just have to go see a movie instead.

Let's find the staff entrance.



Attention! My name is Brash, and this is my partner, Mango. We're **InvestiGators**.

Who can we talk to about the missing paintings?



Do you have credentials?

If you mean badges, yes.

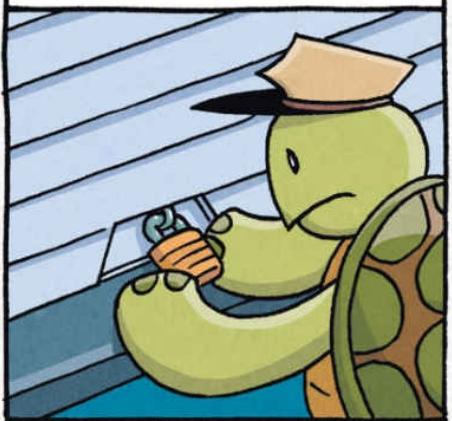




*Special Undercover Investigation Teams



...made sure it was safe and secure...



...and drove right back to the museum!



Did you make any stops along the way?

None! You know, except for red lights and stop signs.



But when we opened 'er up,
the van was *completely empty!*



Beep

Vrrf



Hmm... This clearly wasn't the
work of a mere cat burglar.

Meerkat?



Can't explain it any better than we
could the last time this happened.

How long ago
was that?

Yesterday!



Almost EVERY piece of art for the gala vanished outta this van on its way to the museum.



The big red-carpet shindig later this week.

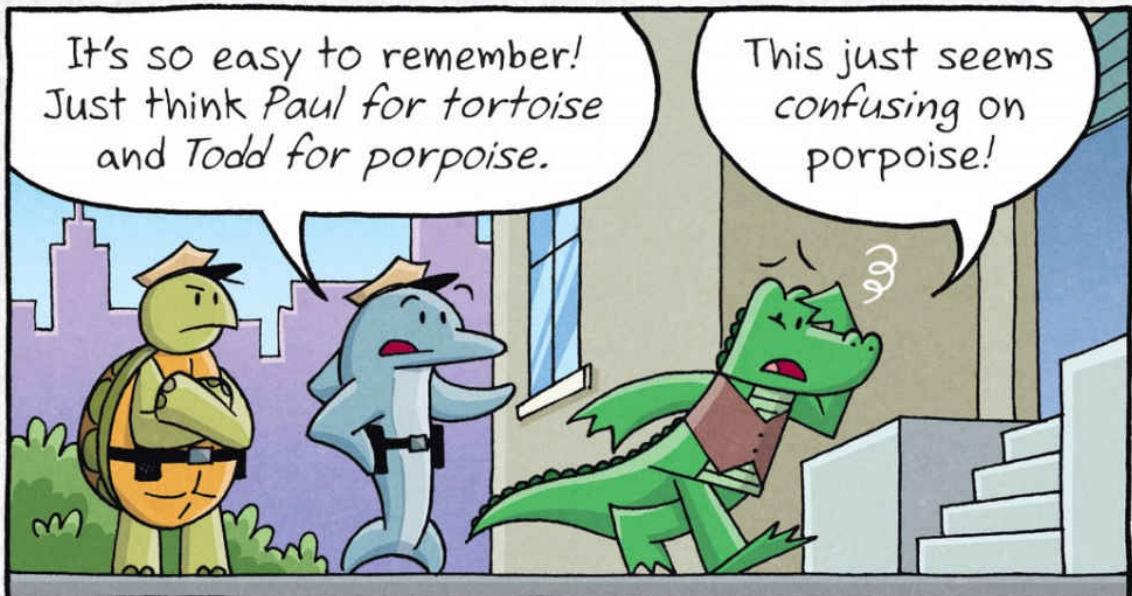
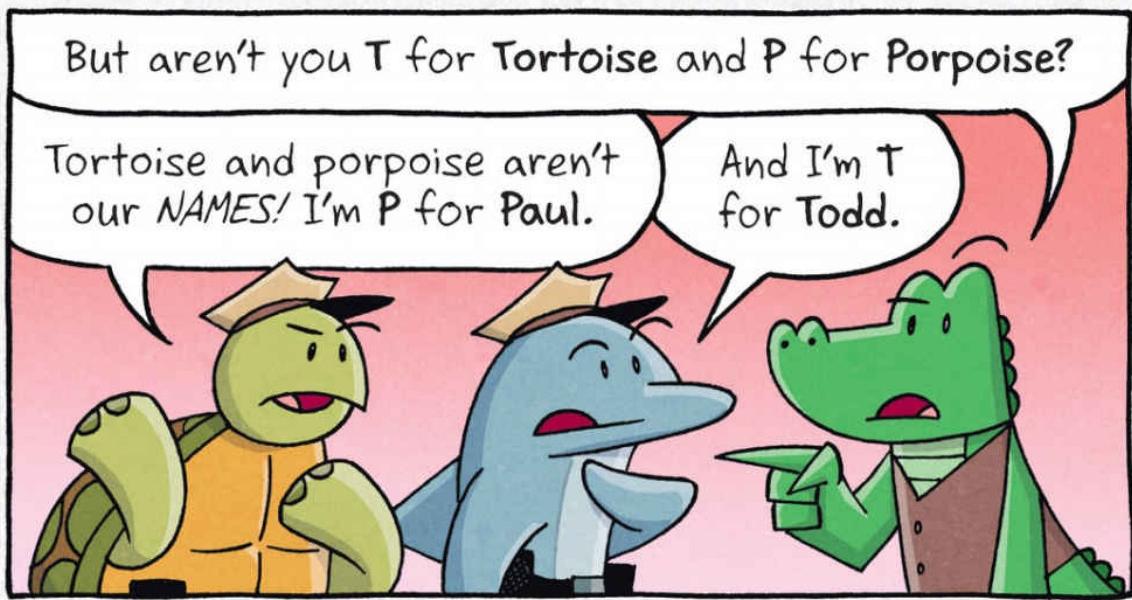
Is any more art expected to arrive for this gala?



My boss, the **museum curator**, would know. You can find him inside.

Thanks, Savanna.





Chapter 3



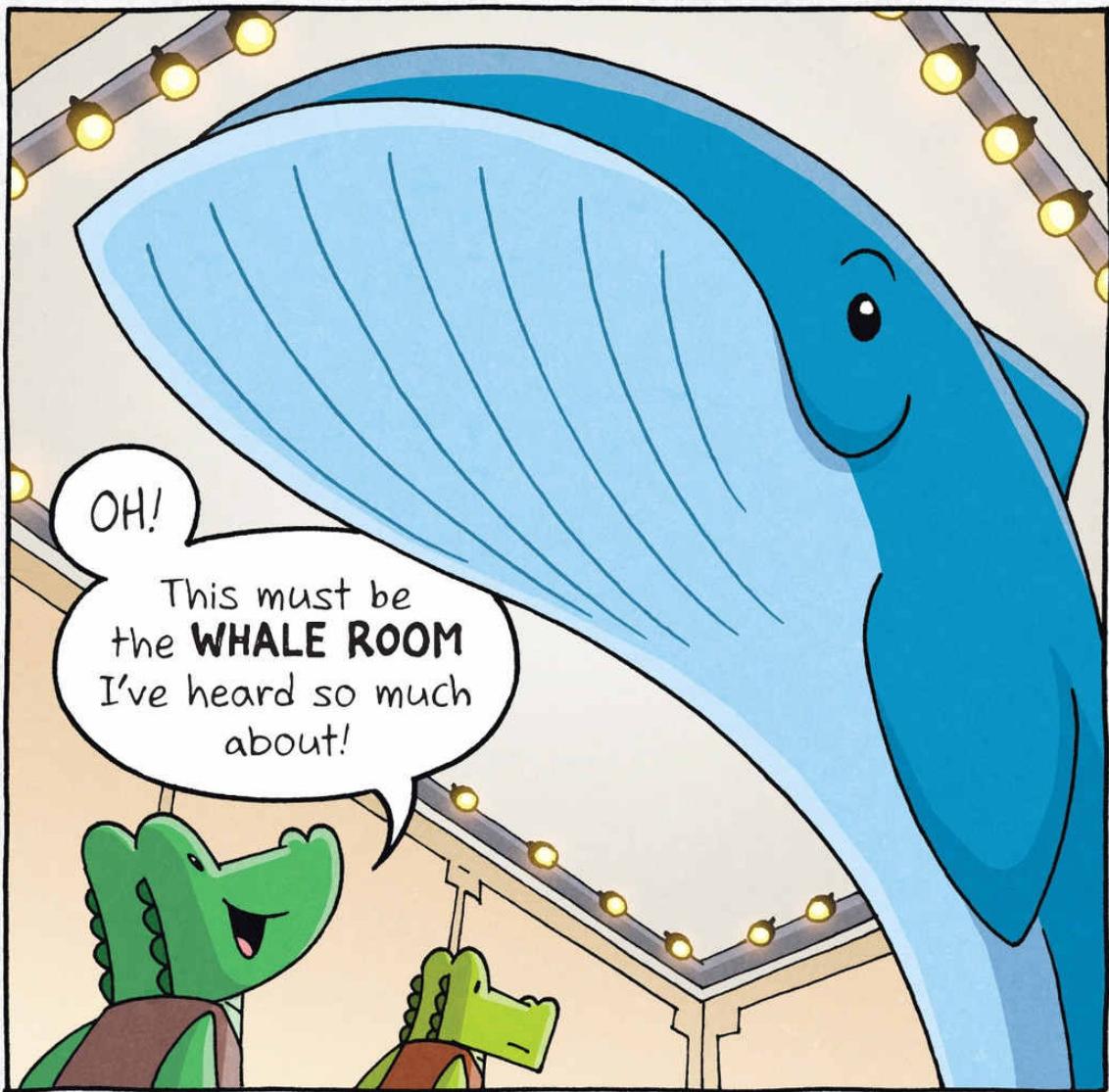
Someone got in and out of that armored car while it was moving without the security guards even noticing? I say there's a chance one or both of 'em are lyin'.

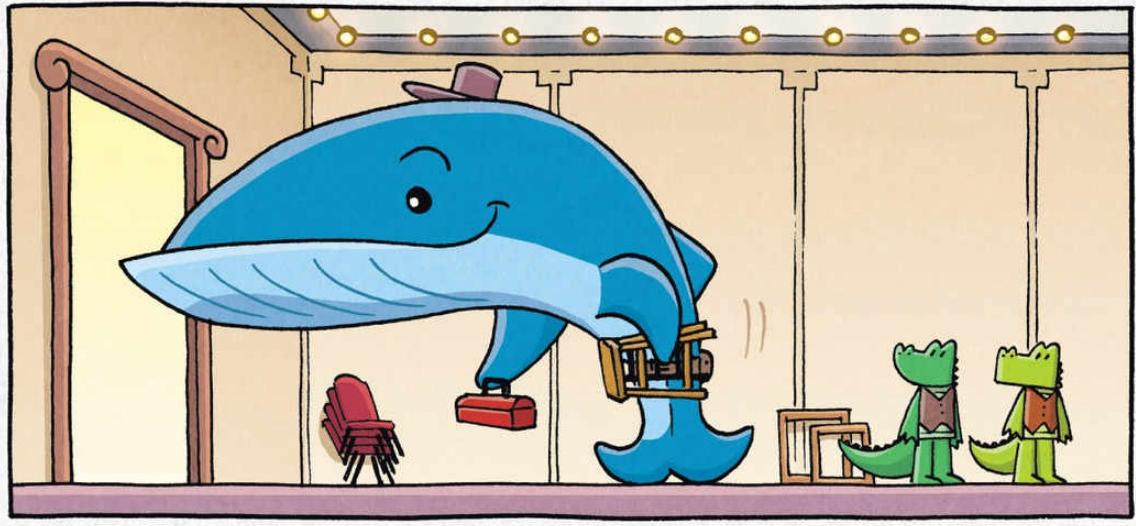
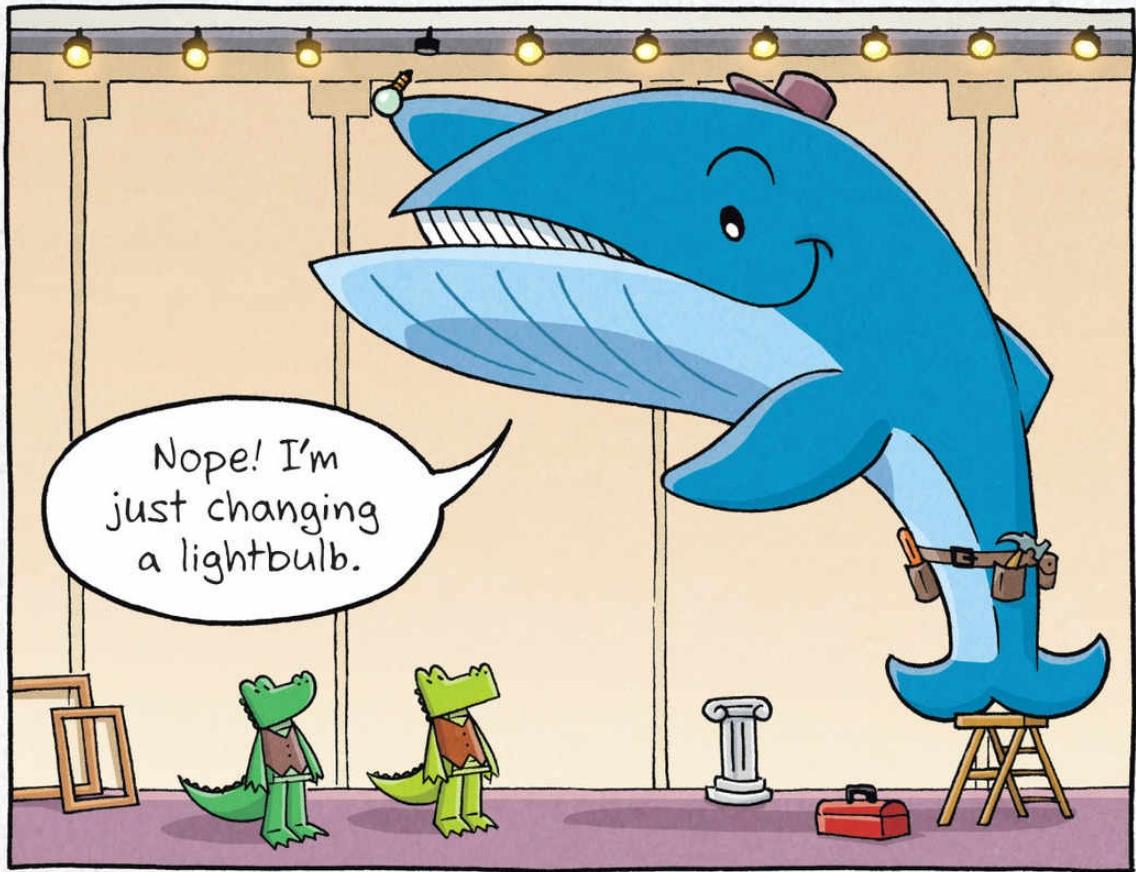
There's no lion. But there is a porpoise, a tortoise, and a cheetah, oh my.

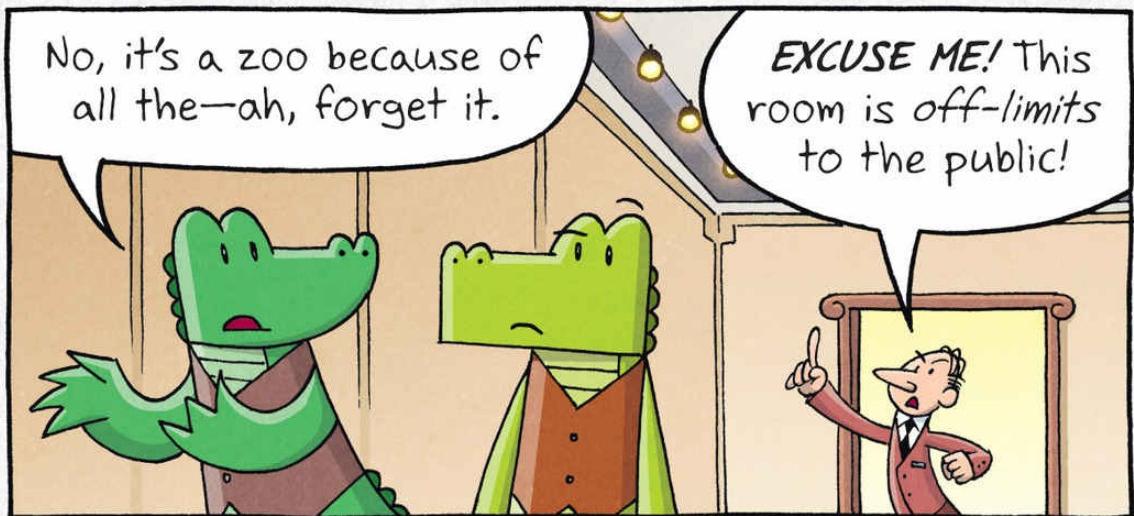


OH!

This must be
the WHALE ROOM
I've heard so much
about!







You must be here about the missing paintings! I am the museum curator and registrar, Thelonious Snoot.

Snoot? That's a funny name.
Anyway, my name's Mango.



Your staff told us all of that art was for an upcoming gala?

It's our **GRANDEST** event of the year. I had the most famous paintings by the most important artists in history flown in from *all over the world* for it!

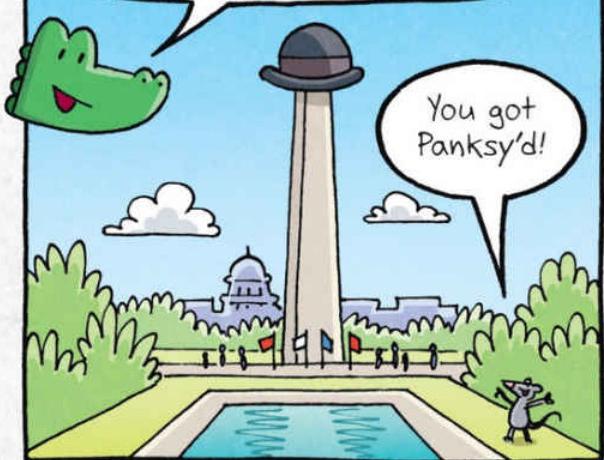


Leodoggo da Vinky! Vincent van Gopher! Frida Jello!
Pablo Pigasso! Edvard Munchies! Jackson Mollusk!
Mary Cassettedeck! Bob Ross! And many more!

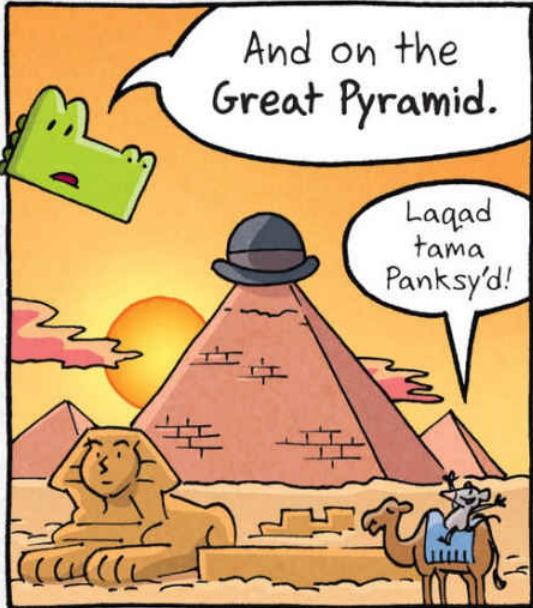




He also put a hat on the Washington Monument.



And on the Great Pyramid.



And on the Eiffel Tower.

Yes, yes, those were all during his HAT PERIOD.

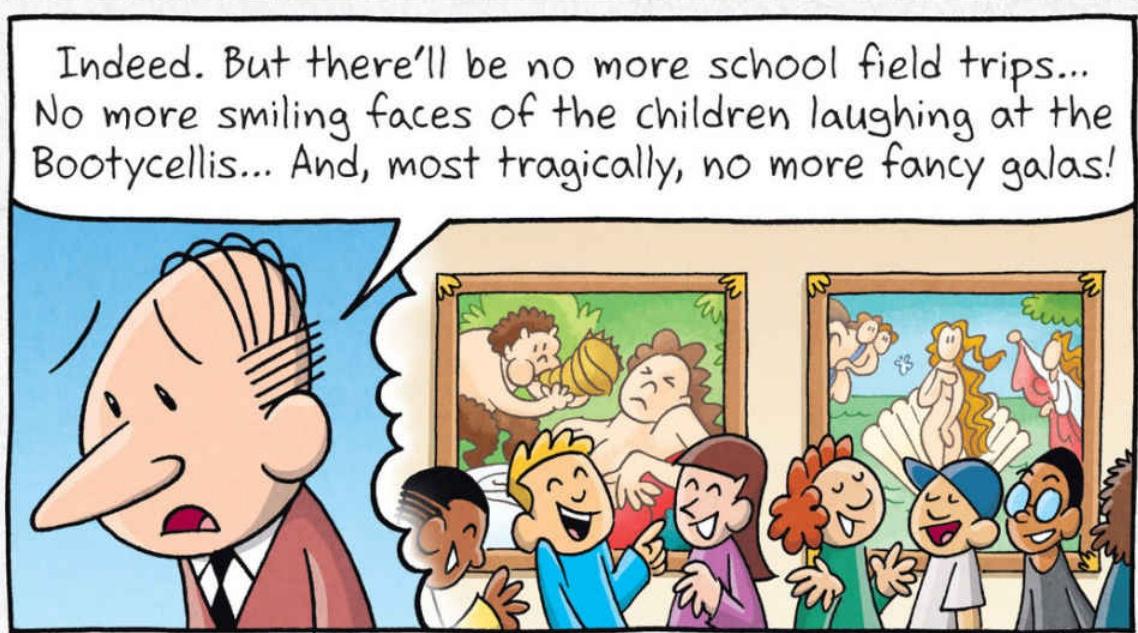
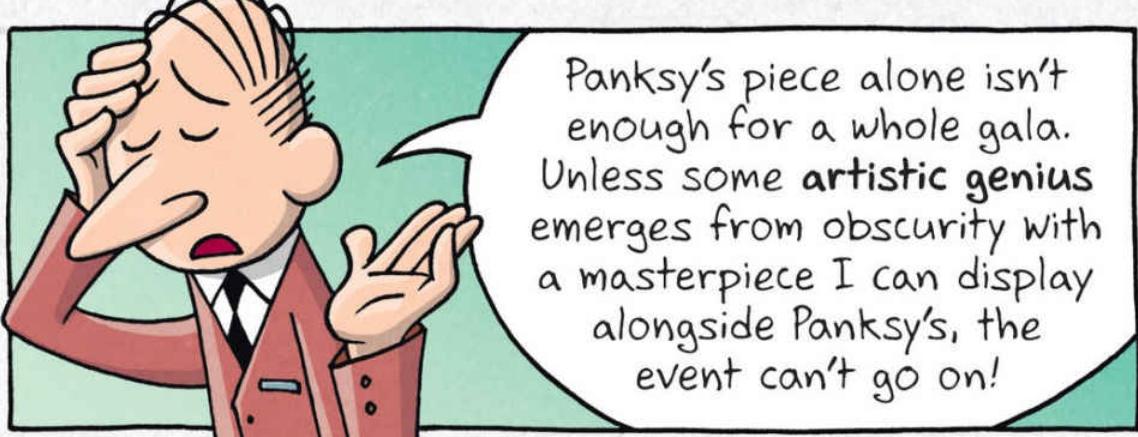


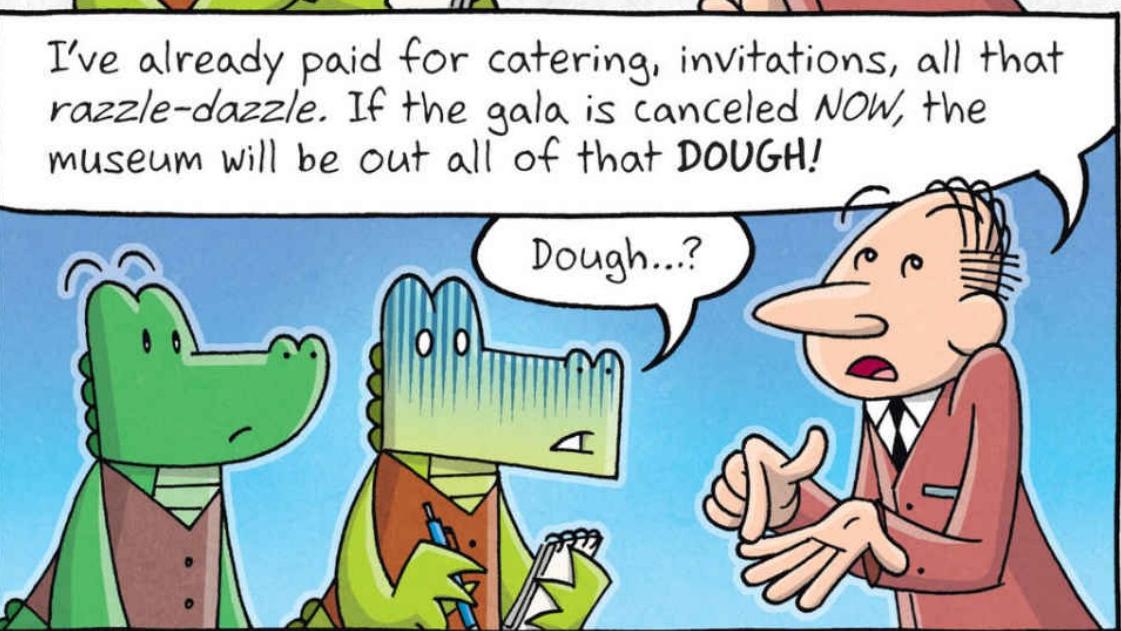
Panksy is the current darling of the fine art world, and the museum is honored to display his latest installation piece.

Ah. A sheet.
Very avant-garde.





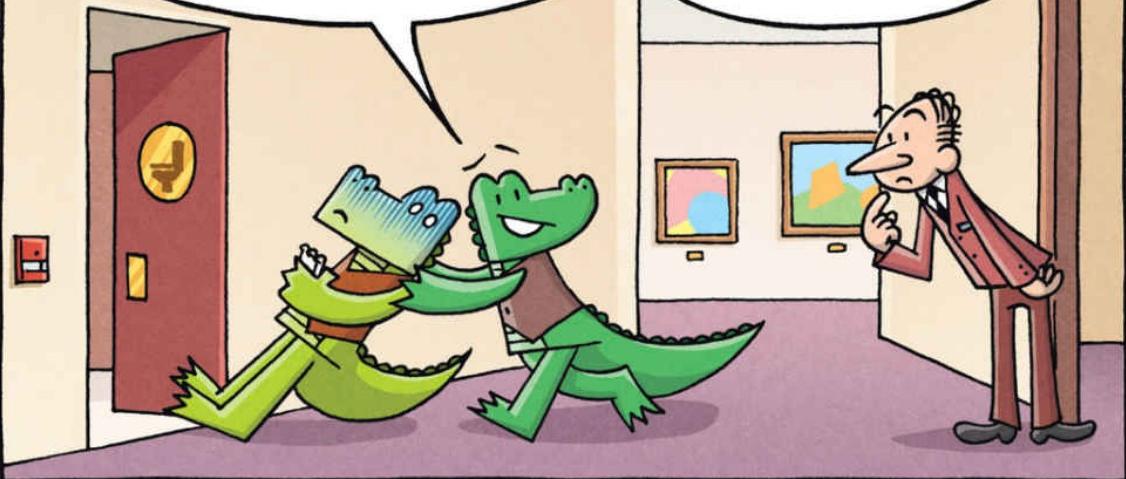




*See **InvestiGators** books 1-5!

Sure... He, uh, just needs to splash a little water on his face.

No worries, Mr. Snoot! We're **ON THE CASE!**



WHA—?!

Whew! Thanks, Mango.



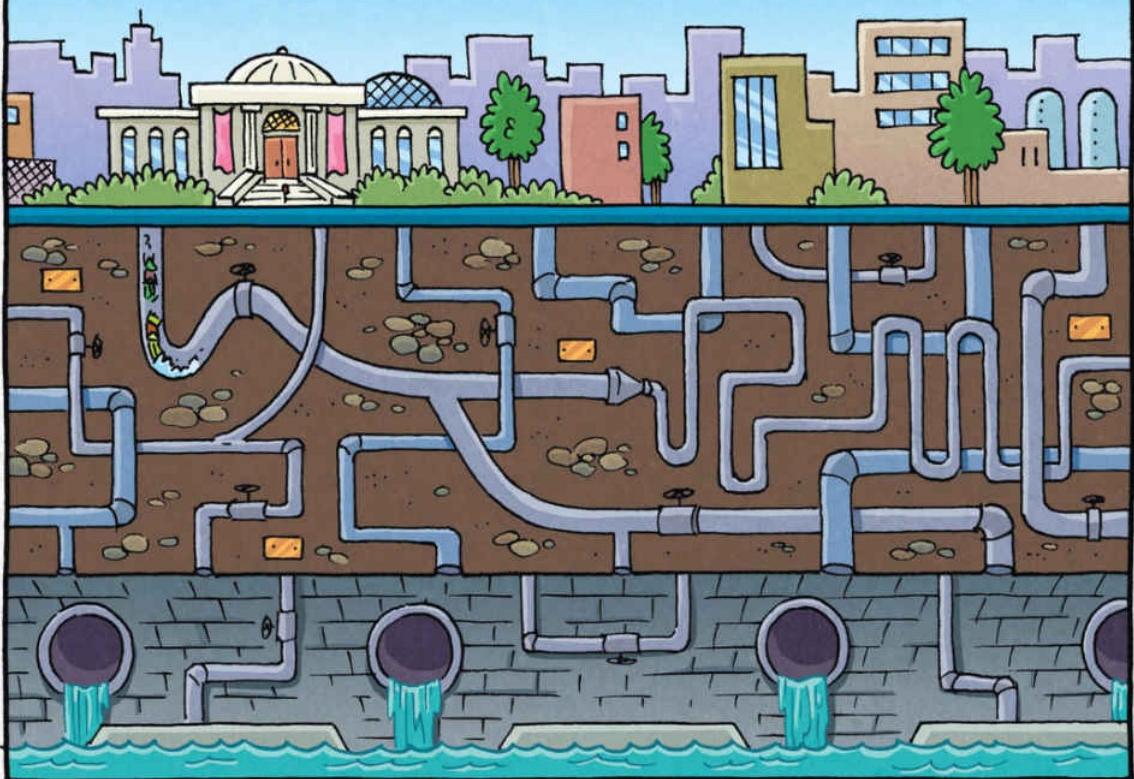
So... If the paintings aren't recovered, the gala will be canceled and the museum will be closed for good.

Which makes me wonder, were the paintings stolen because they're valuable... or is the thief's *true goal* to ruin the museum's reputation?

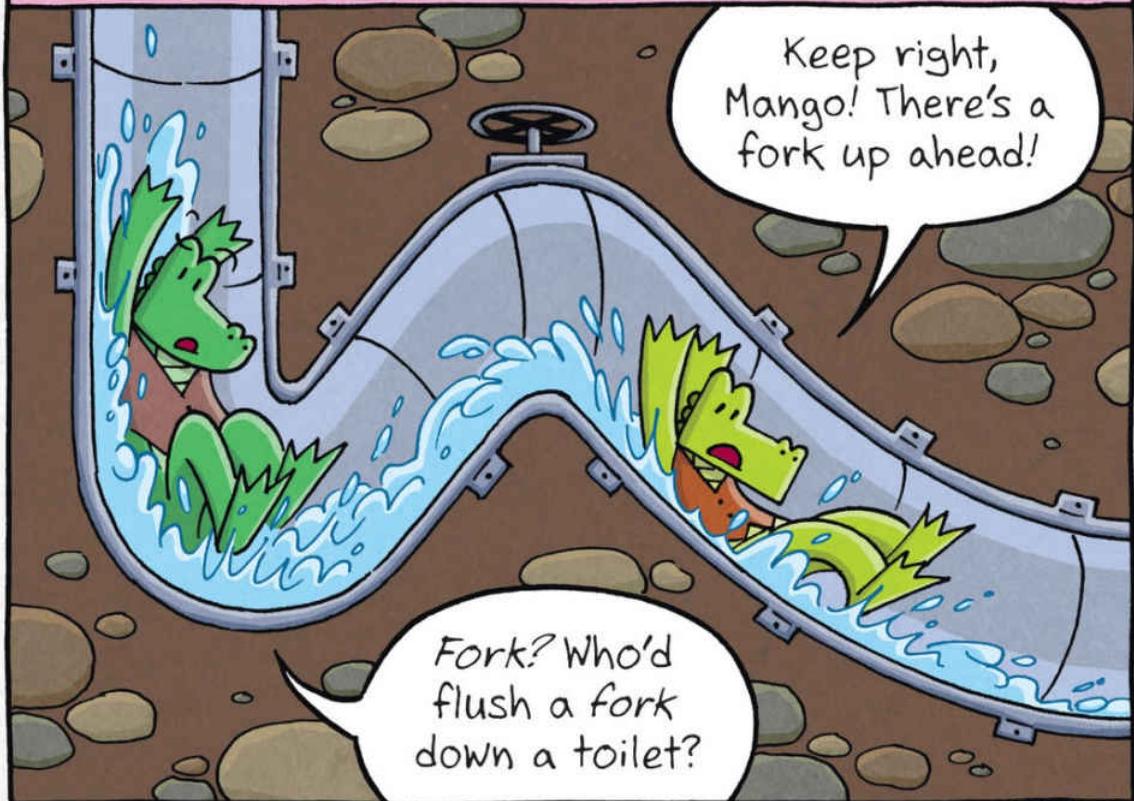




♪ ♪ Investigators, in pipes underground! ♪ ♪



♪ ♪ It's the fastest way to get across town! ♪ ♪



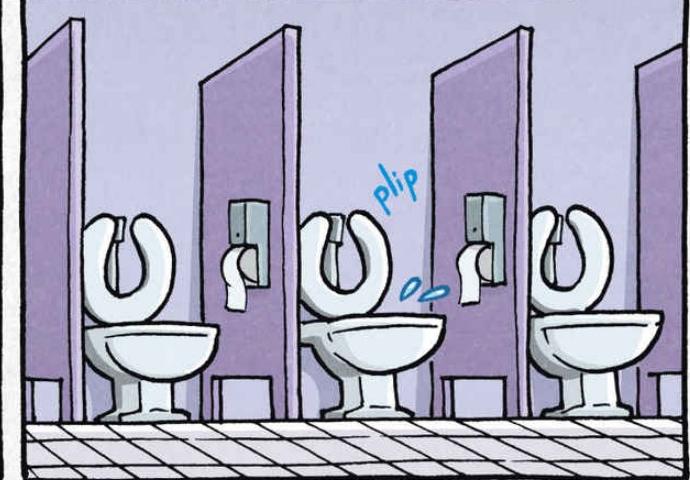
♪ ♪ But not when Mango forgets to turn! ♪ ♪

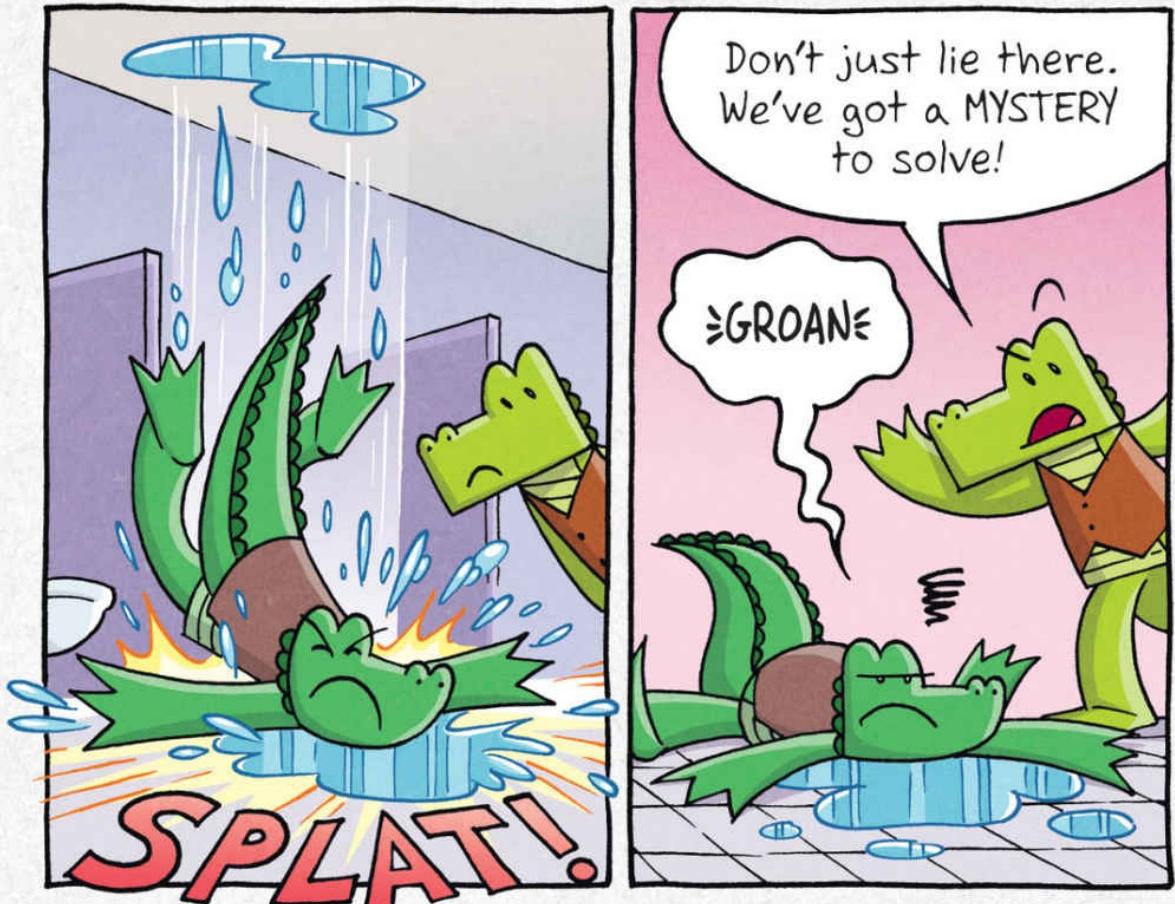


♪ ♪ It's a hard lesson he's about to learn! ♪ ♪



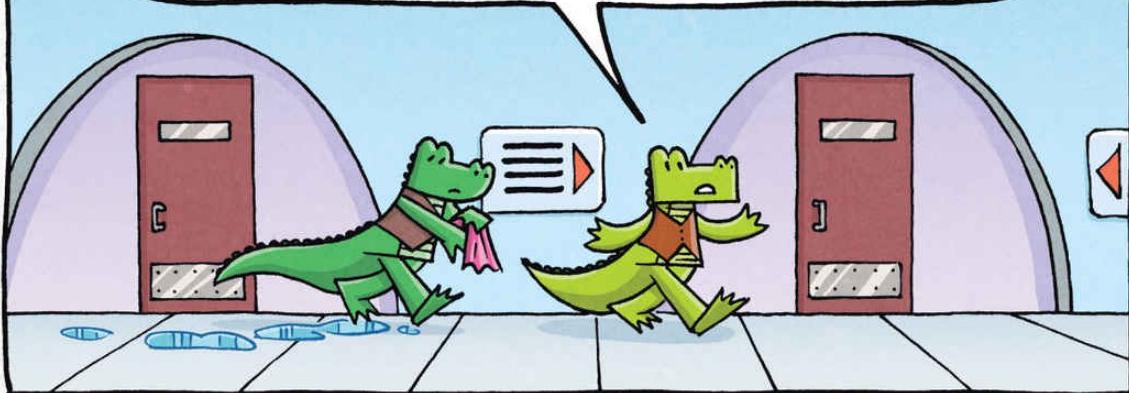
Below the city, in S.U.I.T.'s secret headquarters...





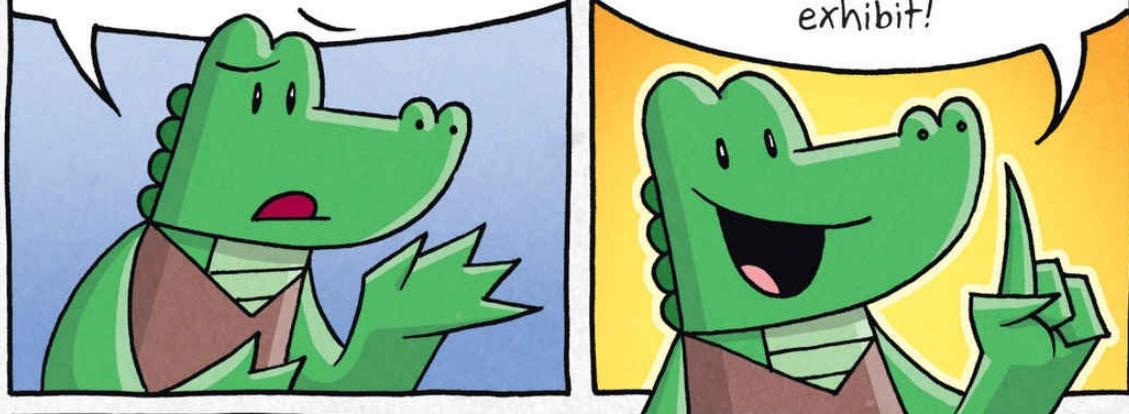
Chapter 4

What we need to do, Mango, is set a **TRAP** for whoever tries to steal the *NEXT* piece of art that's heading to the museum for the gala.



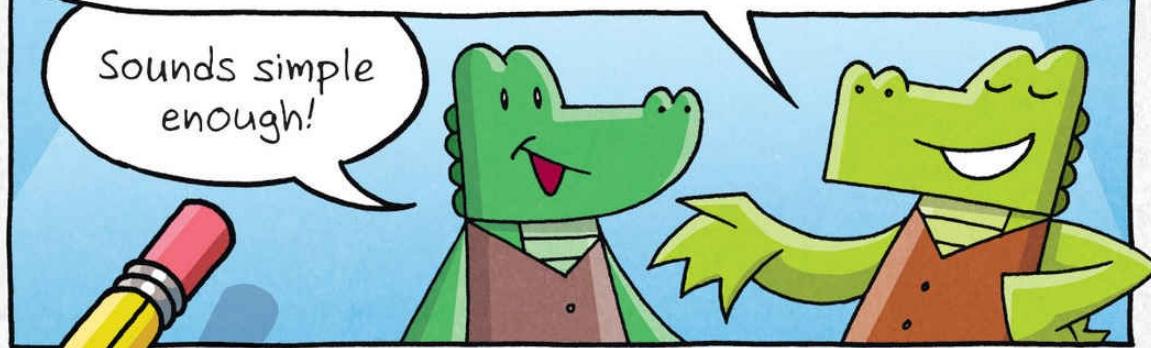
But, Brash, the curator said there isn't any more art on the way. **UNLESS...**

...**WE** become artistic geniuses whose artwork can be added to the exhibit!



EXACTAMUNDO! We create a masterpiece or two, easy peasy, get invited to display them at the gala, and then catch the thief when they try to steal our art as it's being transported in the armored car.

Sounds simple enough!



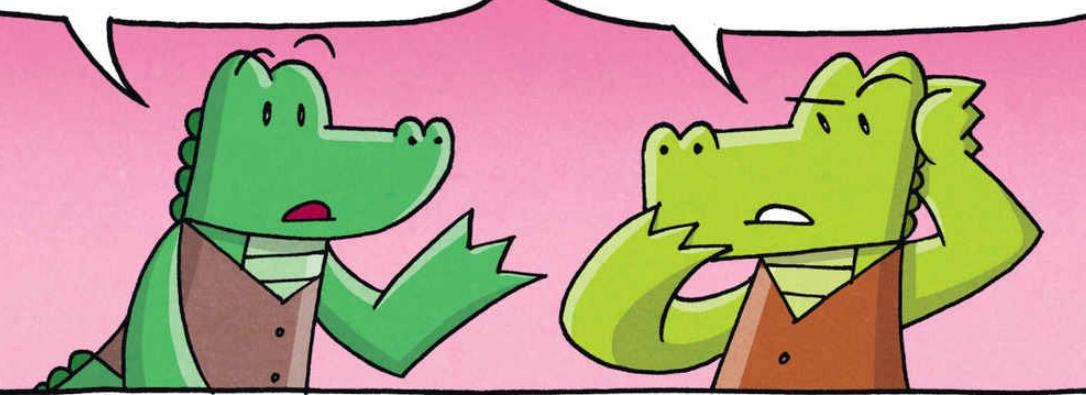
What about the tortoise and porpoise's recollection of events? Do you think their story holds water?

Possibly. But at this stage we shouldn't rule ANYONE out as suspects.



Maybe Snoot's concern over canceling the gala was all just an act.

Hmm... I don't know what he'd have to gain by the museum being shut down...

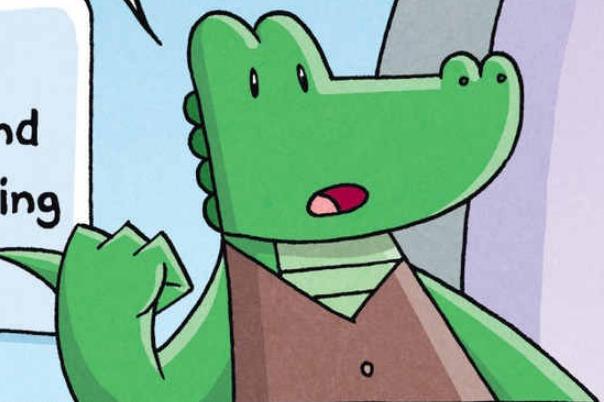


Anyway, we can't let ANY of the museum staff in on our plan. Otherwise, if the heist WAS an inside job, they're not gonna fall for our trap.

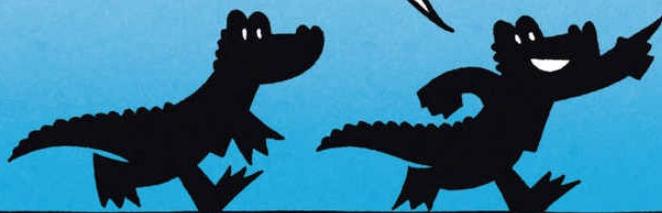


For this to work, Brash, we'll need FOOLPROOF undercover disguises. Let's head to **A.R.M.S.**

Apparel
Research and
Manufacturing
Section

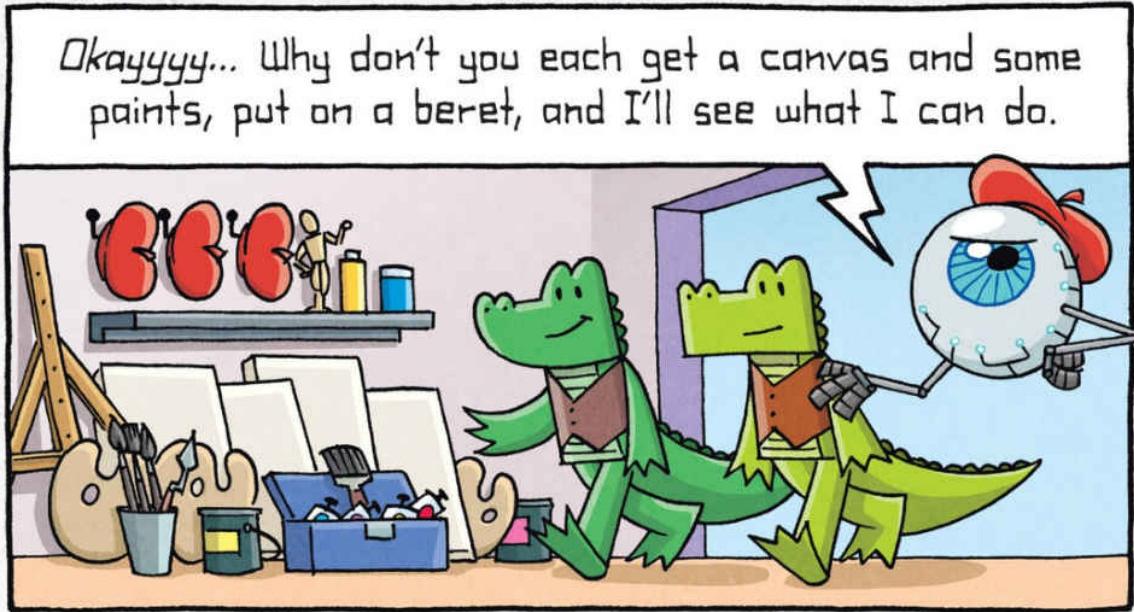
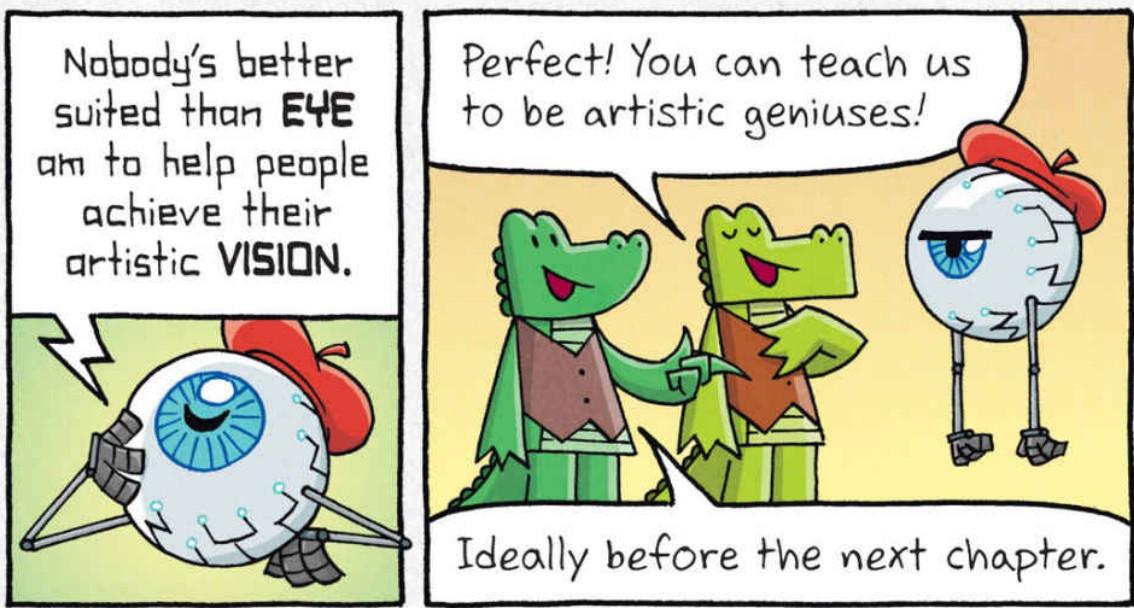


We don't just need new disguises, Mango.
We need new SKILLS! We're heading to **A.R.T.S.!**



A.R.T.S.
ARTISTIC REFINEMENT of TALENT...for SPIES



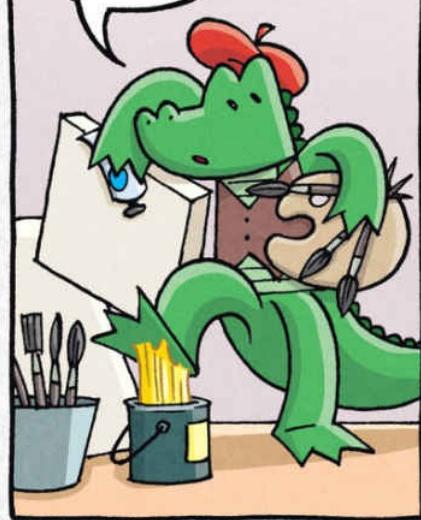


*Computerized Ocular Remote Butler

So many colors! It's like an all-you-can-art buffet!



Oop!



Er, Sorry!

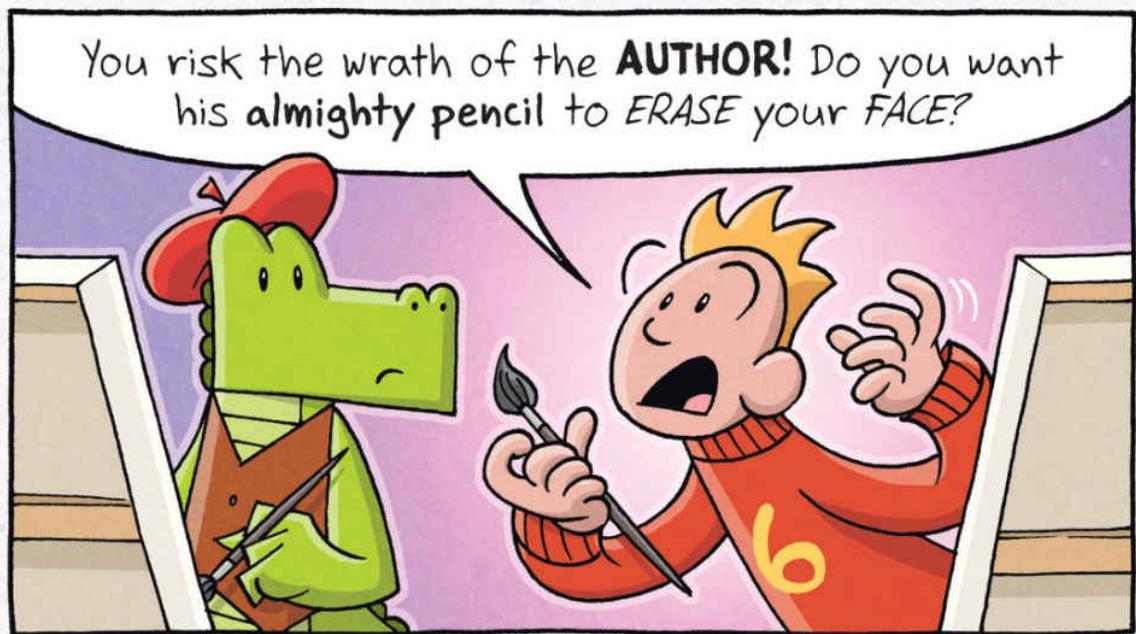


I'll, uh, mop that up later...



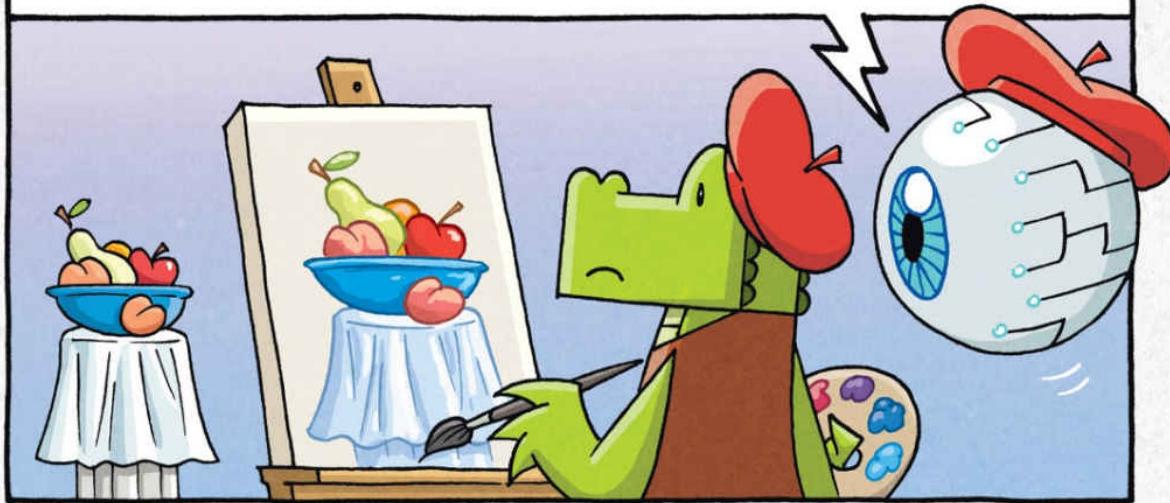
I, um, meant to do that...



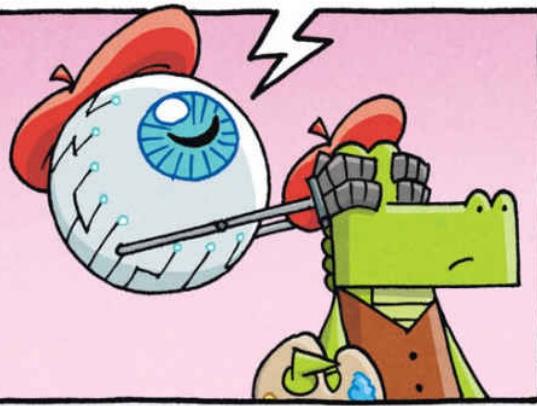




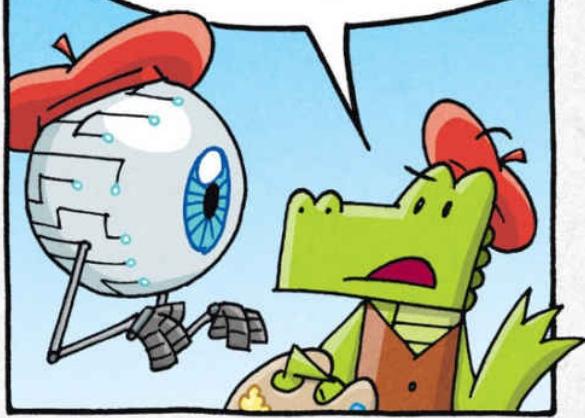
It's very...accurate. Literal. Realistic. But not something one might call *eye-catching*. It doesn't...**SAY** anything.



Don't just paint what you SEE. You must look with your **INNER EYE**.



That's easy for **YOU** to say. You're nothing **BUT** eye!



≡SNORTE You said "butt eye."

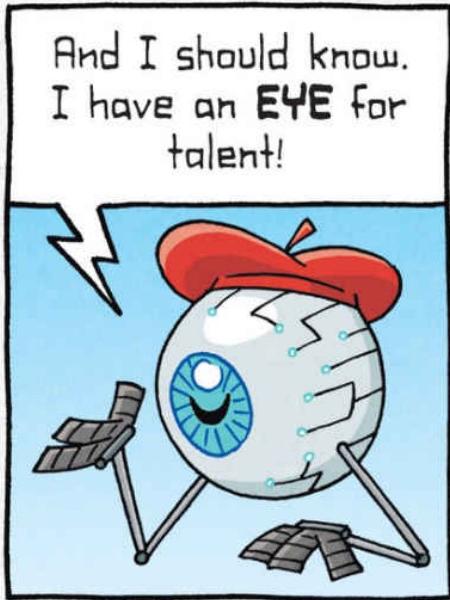
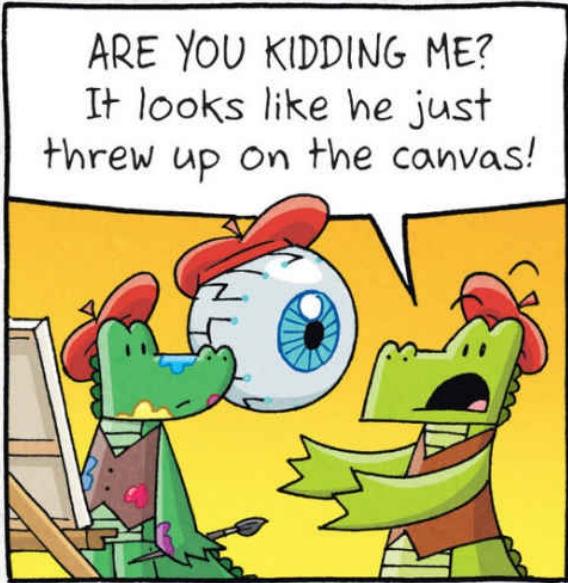


Oh! Now **THIS** speaks to me.

It's so daring... So RAW. So full of **EMOTION!** **A TRUE MASTERPIECE!**

You really think so?







This is for an **undercover mission**, Mango! You can't put your **NAME** on it!

An artist should **ALWAYS** sign their work, Brash.



Hmm. Hopefully it's small enough no one will notice.
We **ALSO** need everyone at the museum to believe
you are **NOT** the **InvestiGator** they met earlier.

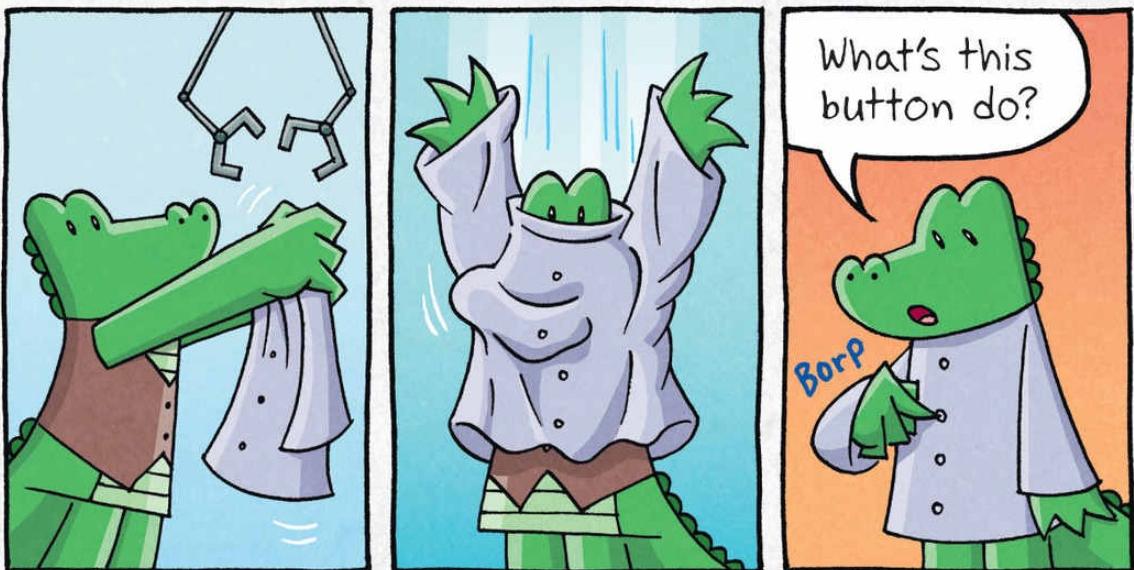
Time to see
Sven Septapus!

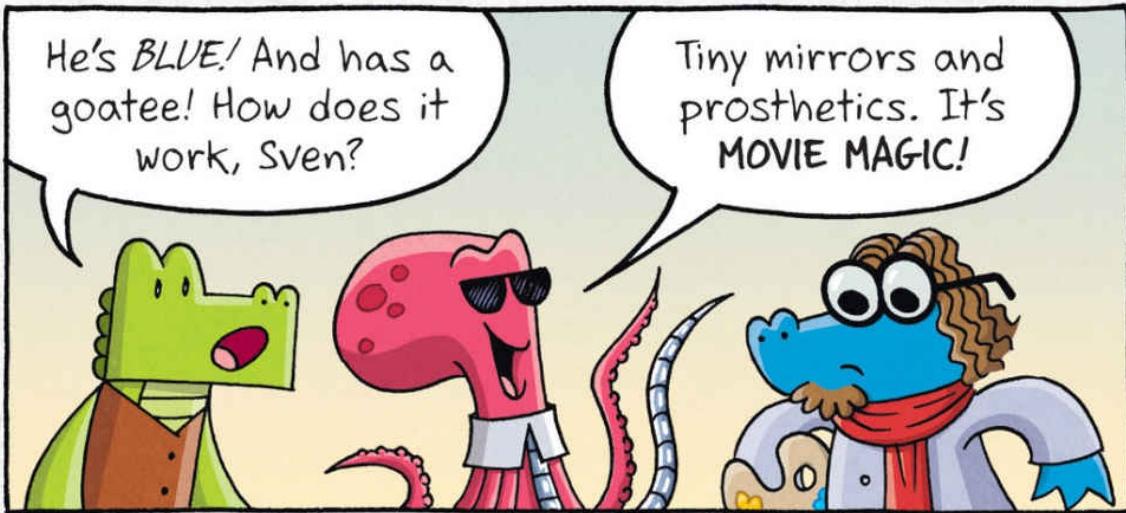
Hello, Susan? Have I found a **TALENT** for you!
No, no, not another **CARTOONIST**—a **REAL** artist!



Chapter 5







I feel like this case isn't simply black-and-white, but more akin to the classical technique of **chiaroscuro**, in which an artist, like myself, uses strong contrasts between light and dark through subtle gradations to convey form and dimension...



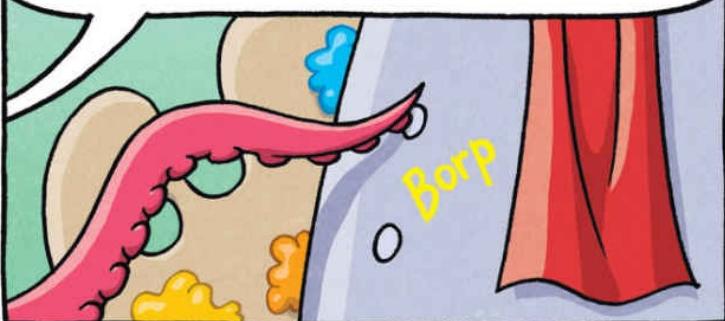
WOW! Brash! I finally understand color theory... composition...three-point perspective...



...and PAINT-BY-NUMBERS!



The best part is, the S.M.O.C.K. itself functions like **any other gadget**, so it can collapse into Mango's standard V.E.S.T. along with the rest of the usual gear.

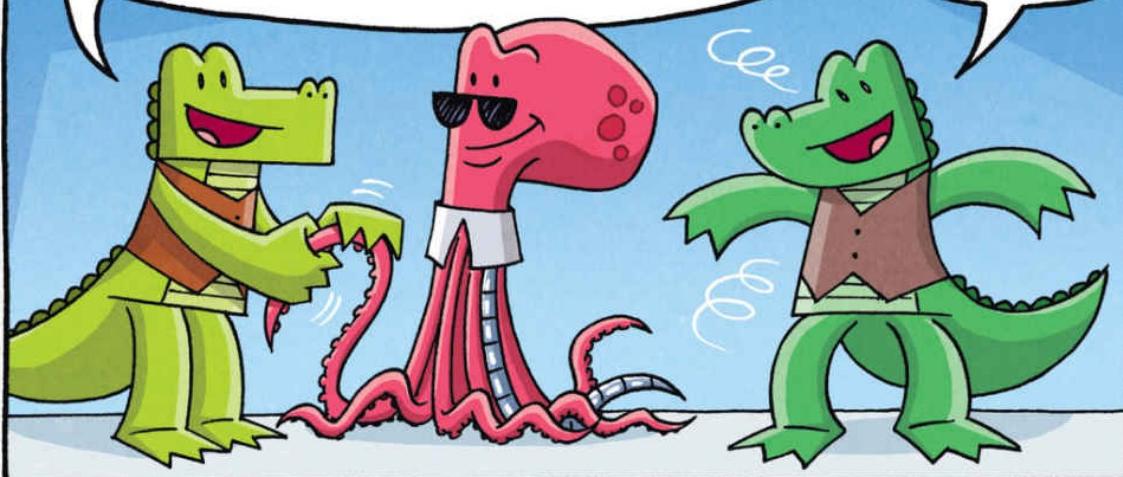


Zop Zep Zip



Great work, Sven. Now to introduce the fine art world to this **international artist extraordinaire!**

Compact!

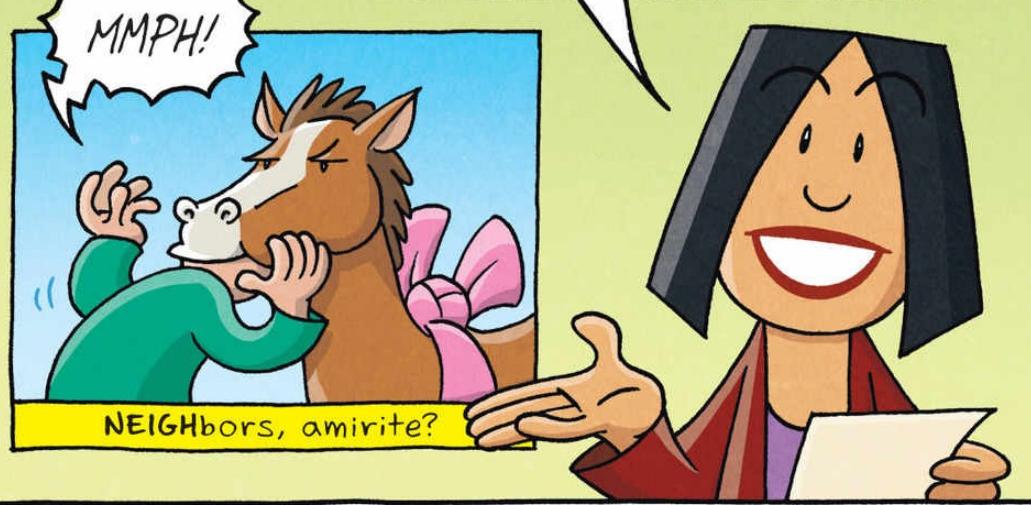


Come on,
Mango!

Can we get lunch first?
I'm a **STARVING ARTIST!**



...and THAT'S why you don't look a gift horse in the mouth. Now for the Arts and Vulture report—



SORRY! The Arts and CULTURE report!

Over to you, Vohnda.



No worries, Cici. Happens ALL the time.



A previously unknown artistic genius has just emerged in the art world. SO unknown that I didn't even ask his name before booking this exclusive remote interview!



That's right! My name is
Macaroni Ancheese!

And where are you
from, Mr. Ancheese?



I'm an artist here in—

≡PST!≡



Here in, um...
Lamp, uh...

...rug, uh...

...lightswitch...

...land.



I'm not familiar with Lamparugalightswitchland.
Is it a small country?



Can you tell us a bit
about what inspired
your latest painting?

This piece was inspired by...
fruit...that grows here in...
Lamparugalightswitchland.



I call it...
"Rhapsody in Fruit."

It is MAHVELOUS. I can
almost TASTE the colors!

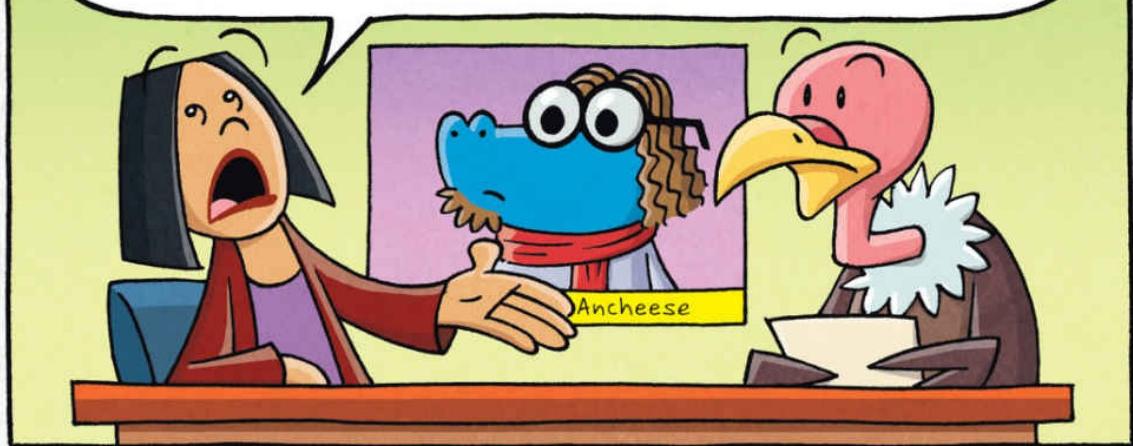


I'd love to give you that opportunity.
If you happen to know of any upcoming
museum galas in your fine city—

Say no
more!



Yes, PLEASE say no more! No one really wants to
listen to people talk about art THAT much!



*It's all inspiration this,
and inspiration that,
and blah, blah, blah!*

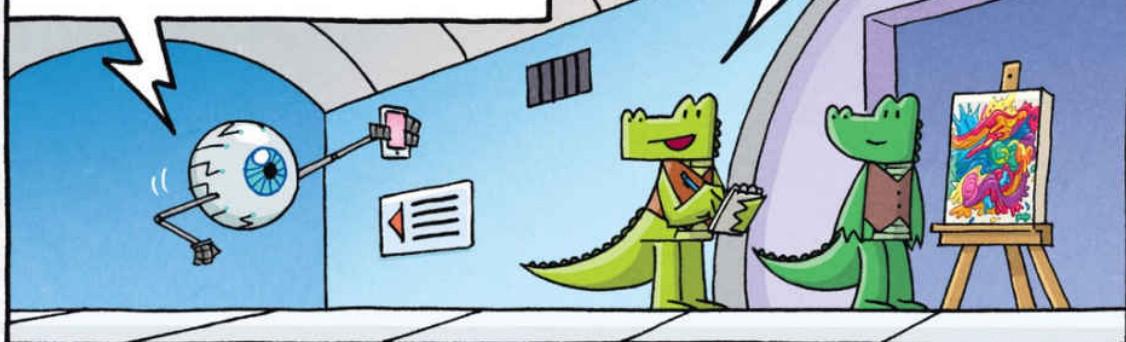
Uh...what's that
eraser doing?



Chapter 6

Gators! Susan says the curator wants Macaroni's "Rhapsody in Fruit" in the museum exhibit!

Just in time! The gala's tomorrow night!



The armored car will be at the airport first thing in the morning to pick up your art once you "arrive" from Lamparugalightswitchland after a layover in Frankfurt.



Mango, you're not actually flying anywhere. Lamparugalightswitchland doesn't exist!

Oh, right.

Now, let's see...

- OPERATION ART TRAP
- 1) Become artistic geniuses ✓
- 2) Get invited to gala ✓
- 3) Catch burglar ✓



Perfect! We're on the last step to solve this case and we're not even halfway through the book!

Maybe this time there'll even be room for a "How to Draw" section.

What are you doing, Mango?

I'm calibrating this **tracking device** to detect wherever my painting is.

If we catch the thief in the act of stealing **THIS** painting, they still might not reveal **WHERE** they've hidden the **OTHER** paintings they've stolen.

Hmm, good point.

But if we let them think they've gotten away with the painting, we can then track them to their hideout with **THIS!**

That's using your noodle, Macaroni!

PAINT CHIP TRAKR

C'mon, Macaroni Ancheese! You've got a plane to pretend to catch!

Uh, I know this is the fastest way to travel, but how do we flush my painting down the toilet?

We don't have time to figure this out! Let's just skip to us already at the airport.

Here we are!
That was easy.

Avoided the lines and everything!
We've got time to check out the
duty-free store.



Well, I would HOPE
it's doody-free!
It'd be unsanitary
otherwise.

Wait a minute! This isn't
the airport...

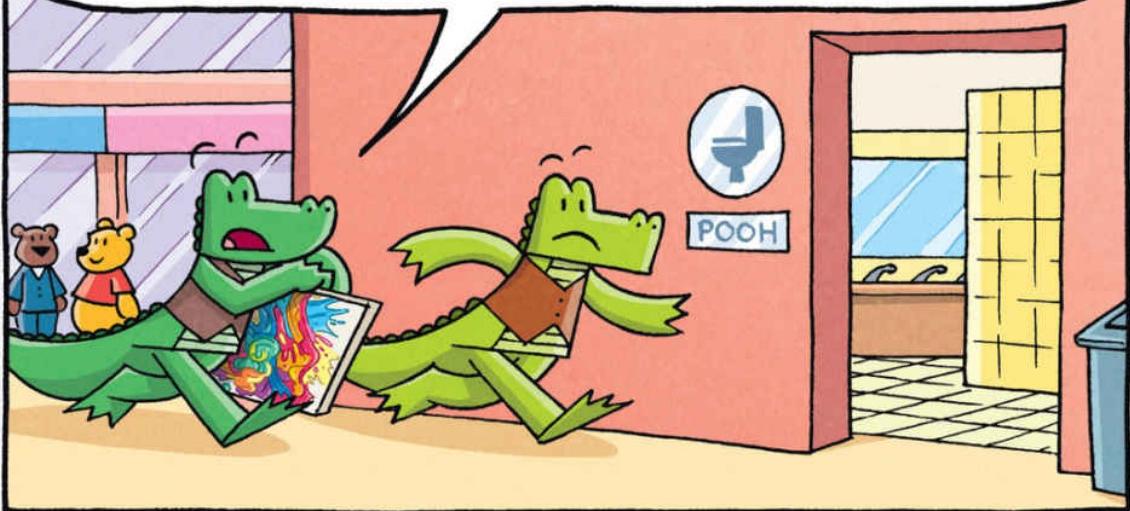


This is the BEARPORT!



That's the problem with skipping
ahead. You may end up in the wrong place!

It's a good thing we showed up four hours early, like the TSA recommends for international flights.

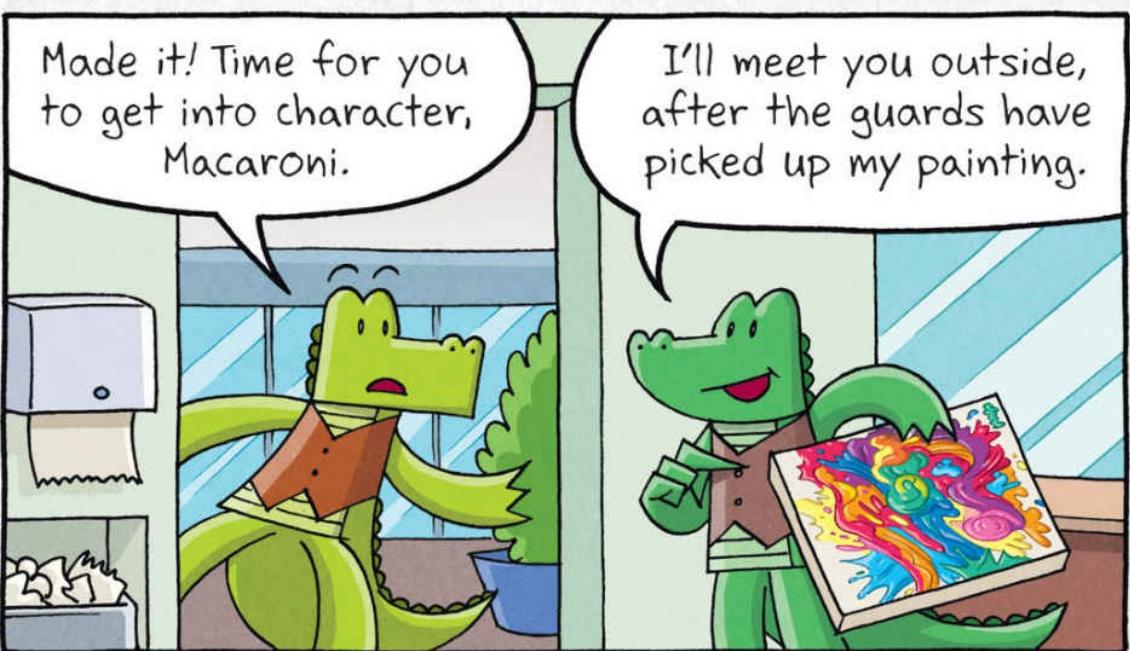


At the ACTUAL airport...



Made it! Time for you to get into character, Macaroni.

I'll meet you outside, after the guards have picked up my painting.







Woulda been polite
of them to offer me
a *ride*, at least!

Over here, Mangoroni!
I mean—Macaroni!

The trap is set, Brash. Now to see who falls for it!

Let me just turn off
these art layers...

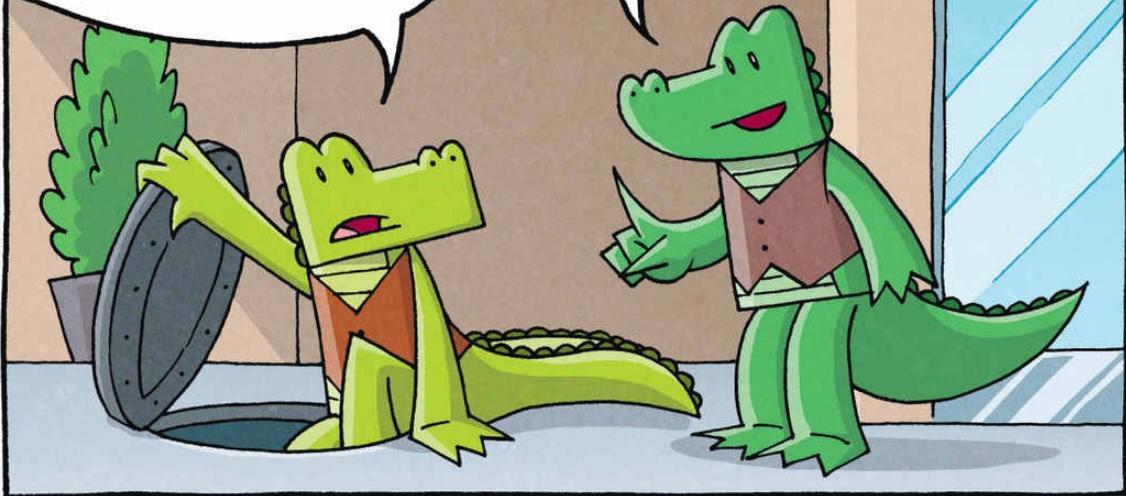
Borp

Nep
Nop
Nip

...and get back into
InvestiGator mode!

Down here, Mango. We can track your painting from below in the sewer.

Good idea! That way no one will see us following the armored car.



Hurry, before it gets too far.

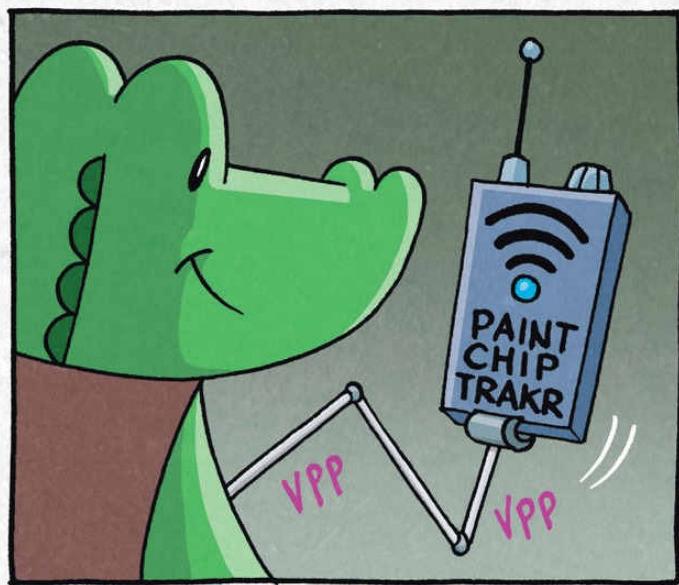
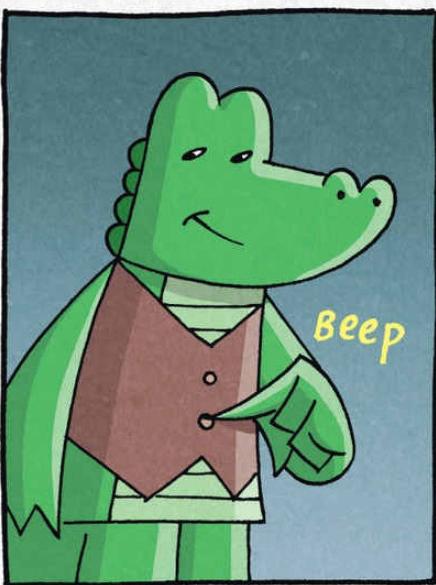


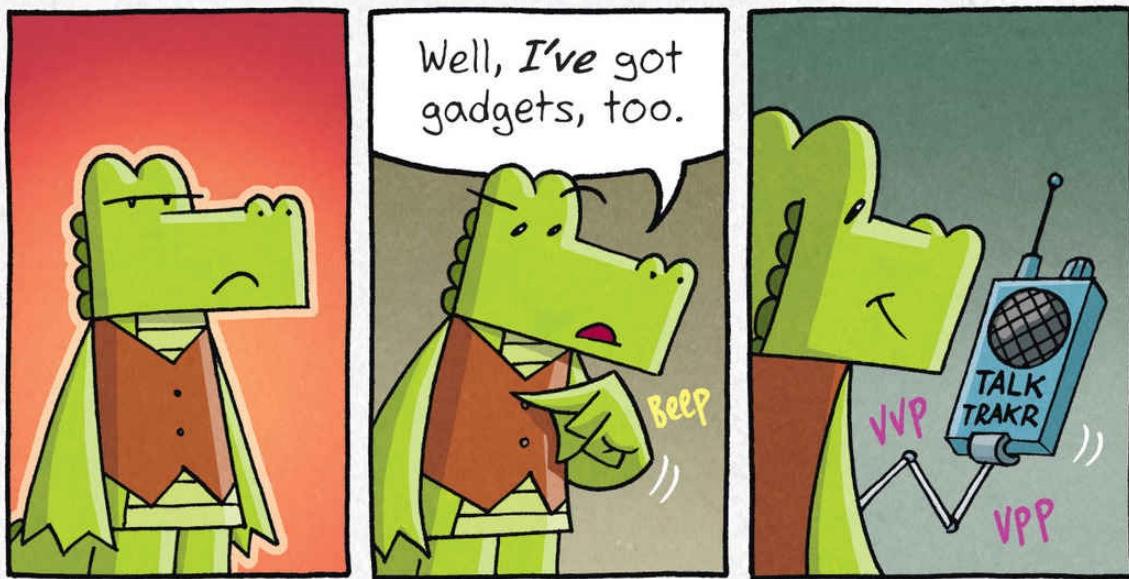
Beep

PAINT CHIP TRAKR

VPP

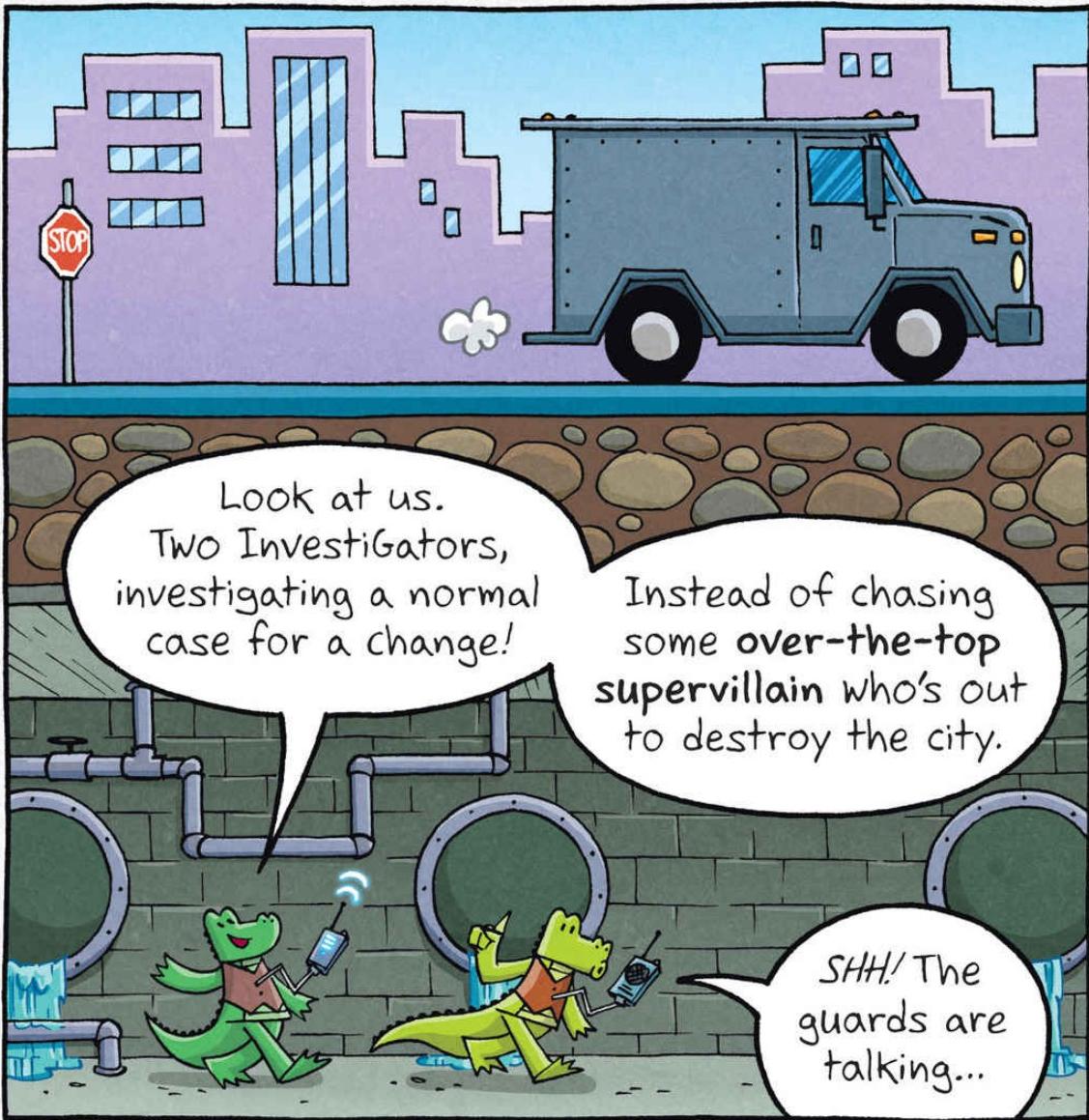
VPP

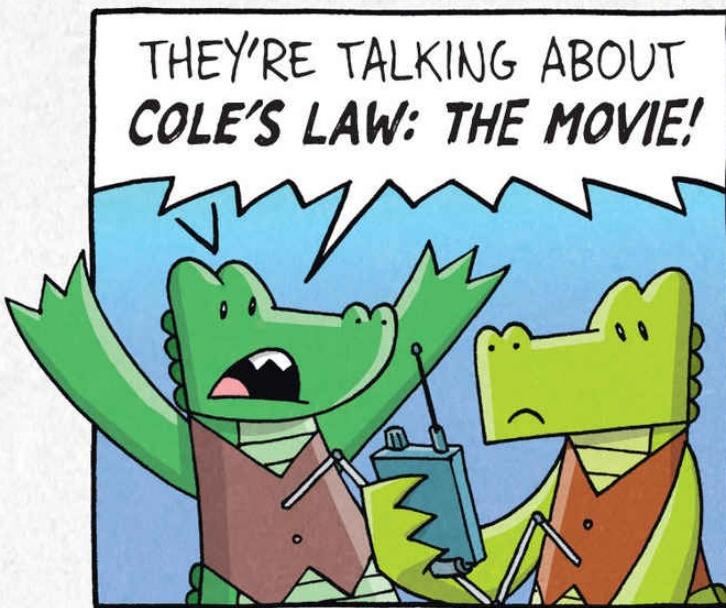




With this, we can listen to the security guards through their walkie-talkies. If they're in on the art heist, they'll surely say something that gives themselves away.



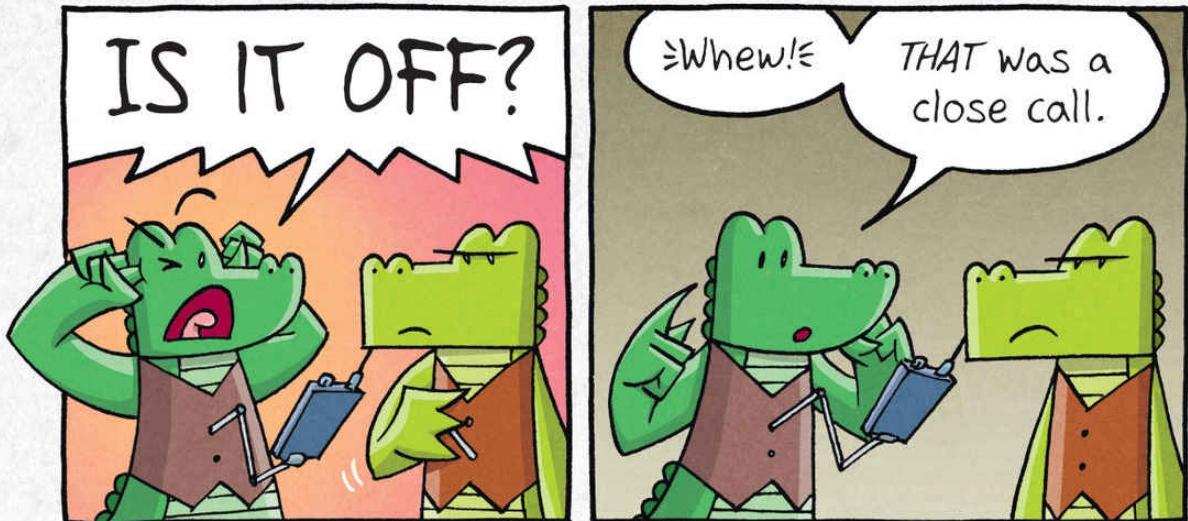




LA LA LA LA LA LA LA LA



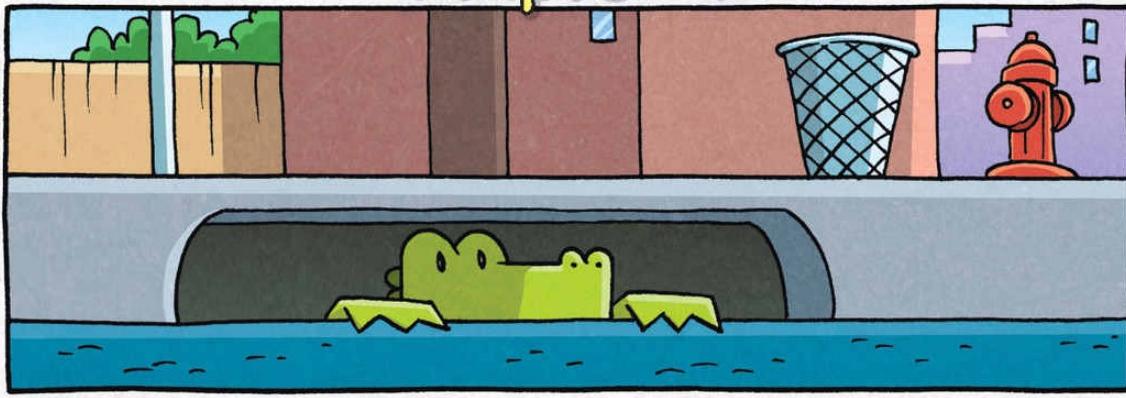
IS IT OFF?



They could've given away
the rest of the movie!



Chapter 7



The armored car is about a block away.



It's still heading toward the museum. Is your canvas still in the back?



Hold on... The signal seems stronger *THAT* way.

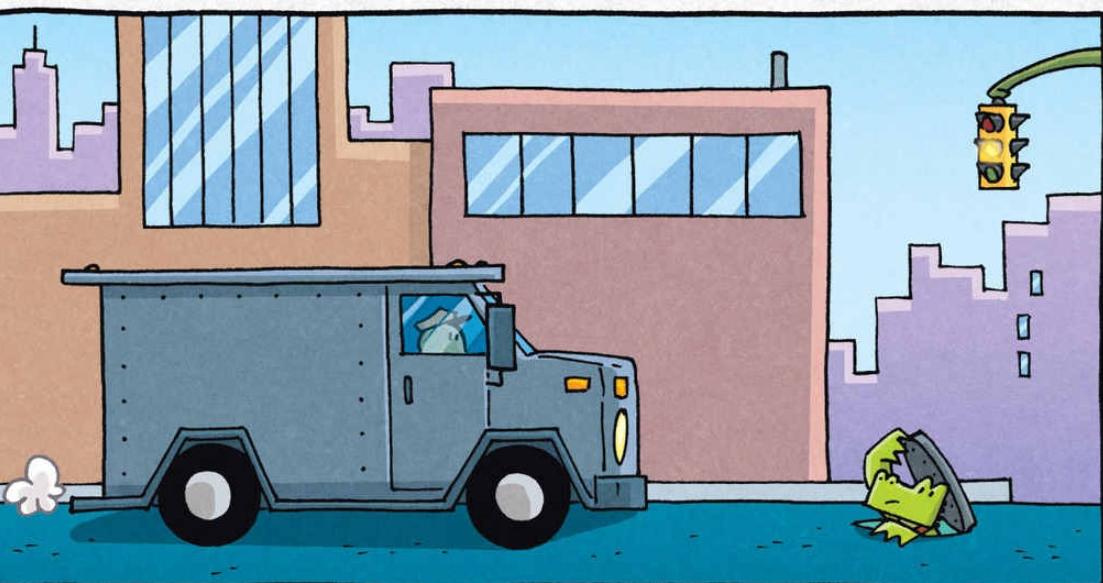
But the van is going *THIS* way.



The art thief must've taken the bait!

PERFECT! Now to wait for them to take it to wherever they've stashed the other stolen paintings.

In the meantime, we should check the armored car for evidence this criminal may have left behind.





No sign this lock's been tampered with.
But whether or not the guards are in
on it, *SOMEONE'S* taking the painting
somewhere.

We lost
ANOTHER
painting?
NO WAY!



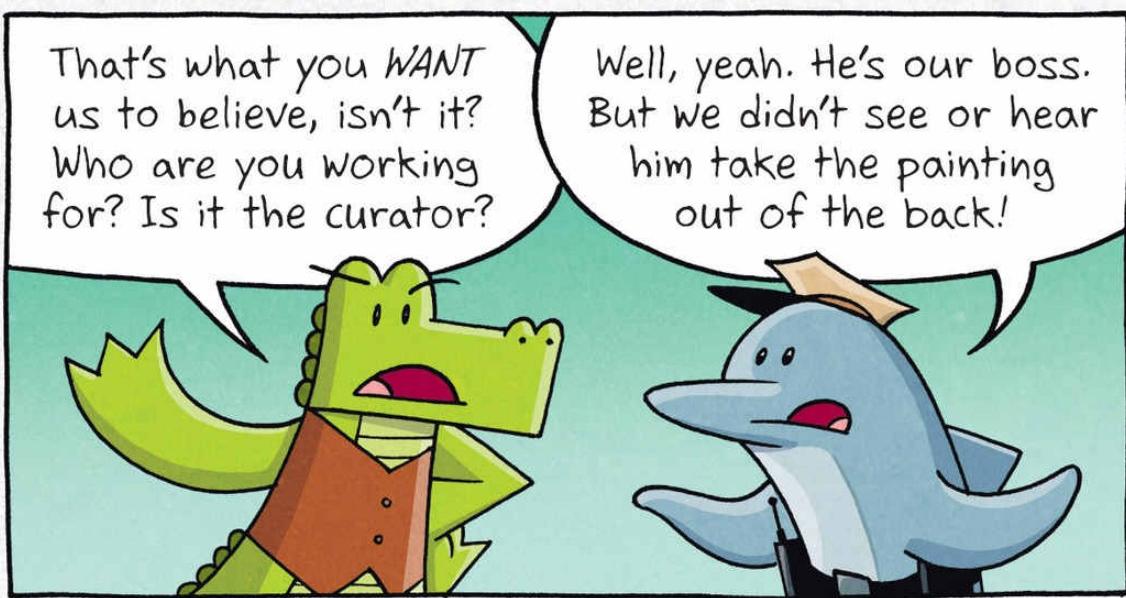
IT'S GONE! That Macaroni
Ancheese is gonna be so
cheesed off!

Dang, we are not
good at our jobs.



That's what you **WANT**
us to believe, isn't it?
Who are you working
for? Is it the curator?

Well, yeah. He's our boss.
But we didn't see or hear
him take the painting
out of the back!



This thief must've been invisible! Or just so fast we didn't even notice!

AH-HA! Aren't tortoises fast? You beat a rabbit in a footrace!

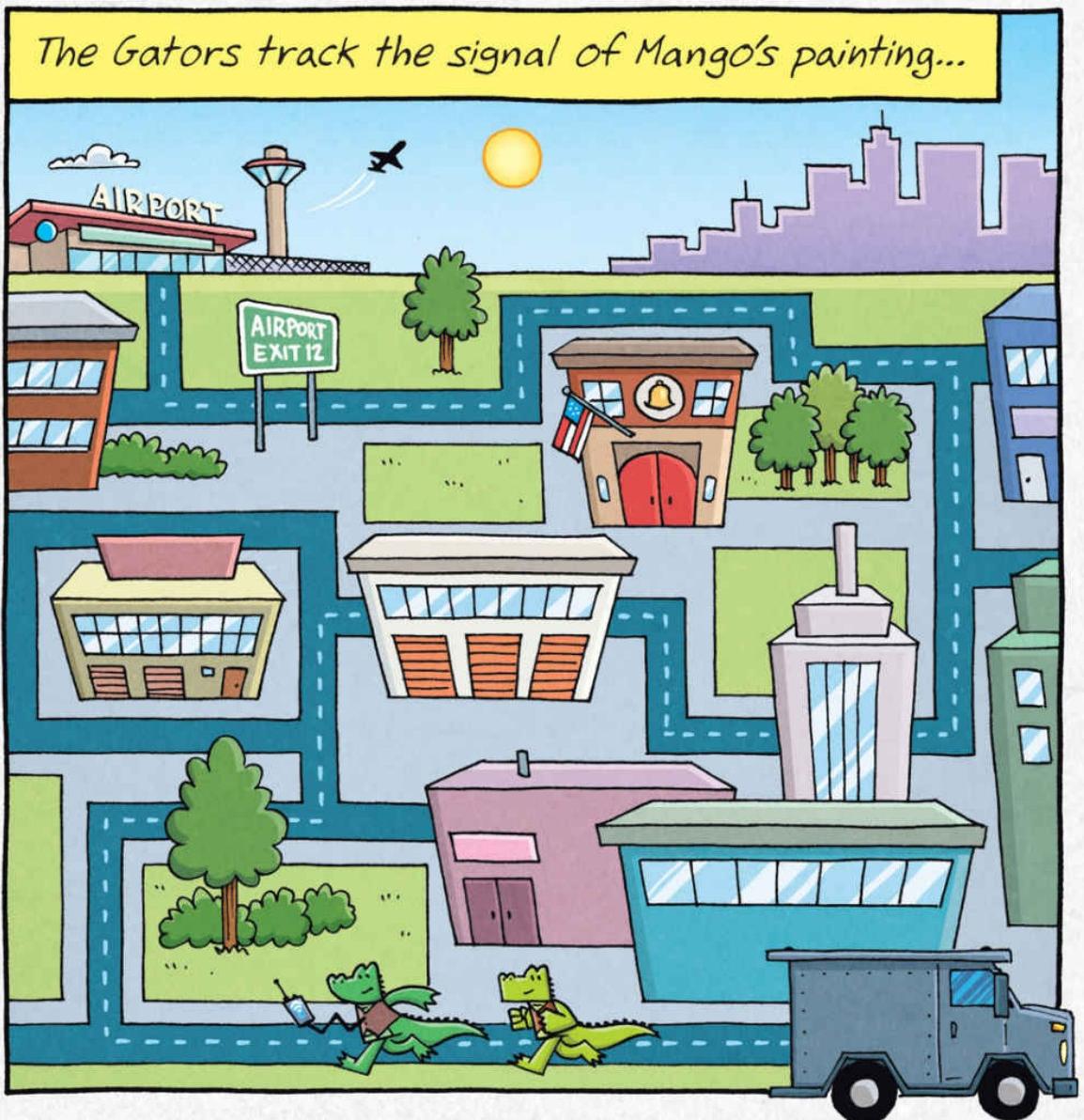
To be fair, that rabbit was asleep.

I still got this medal, though!

Brash! The signal stopped moving!

Our art-napper must have reached their secret hideout.

Follow that signal, and we'll catch them with the rest of the art they napped! I mean, nabbed!



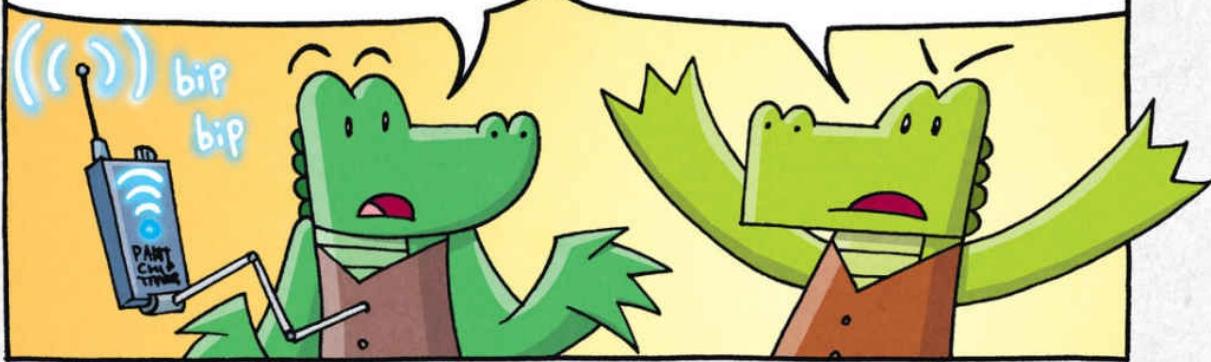
The signal's spiking. My painting should be nearby.

Okay. Canvass the area.



That's what I said, my canvas is in the area.

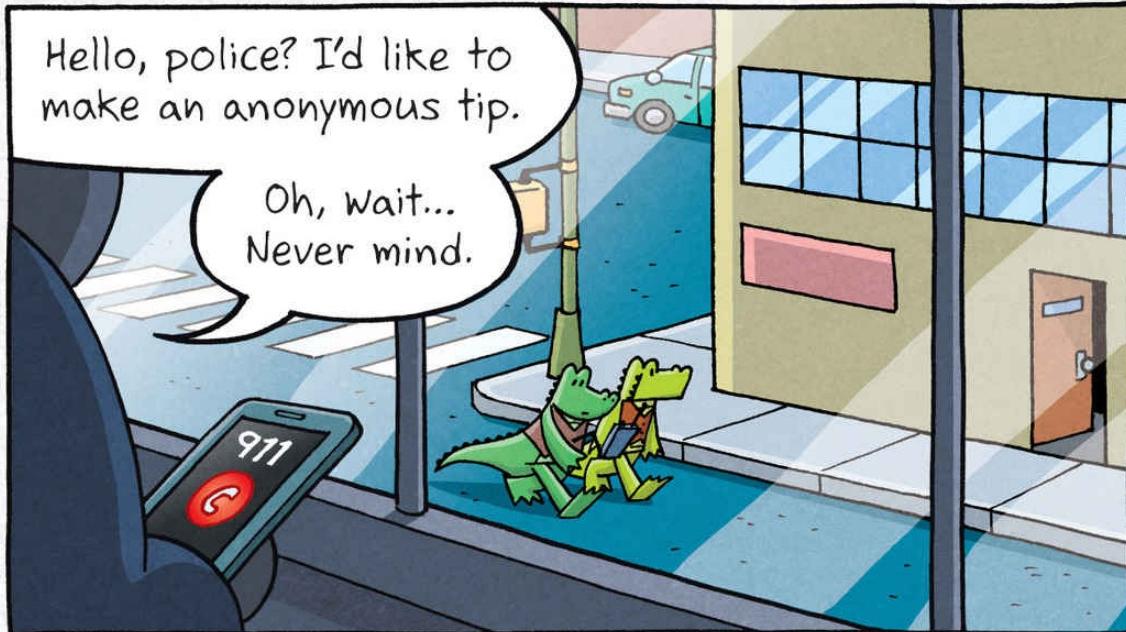
I mean "canvass" as in search the surroundings!



OHHH, canvass for my canvas.

Well, it's gotta be in one of these buildings.







And here's Macaroni Ancheese's "Fruity Rhapsody"!



Speaking of weight, how are we going to carry all these paintings to the museum?

Ugh. Let's just skip ahead again.



TA-DA!

Great! Now let's—Hang on...

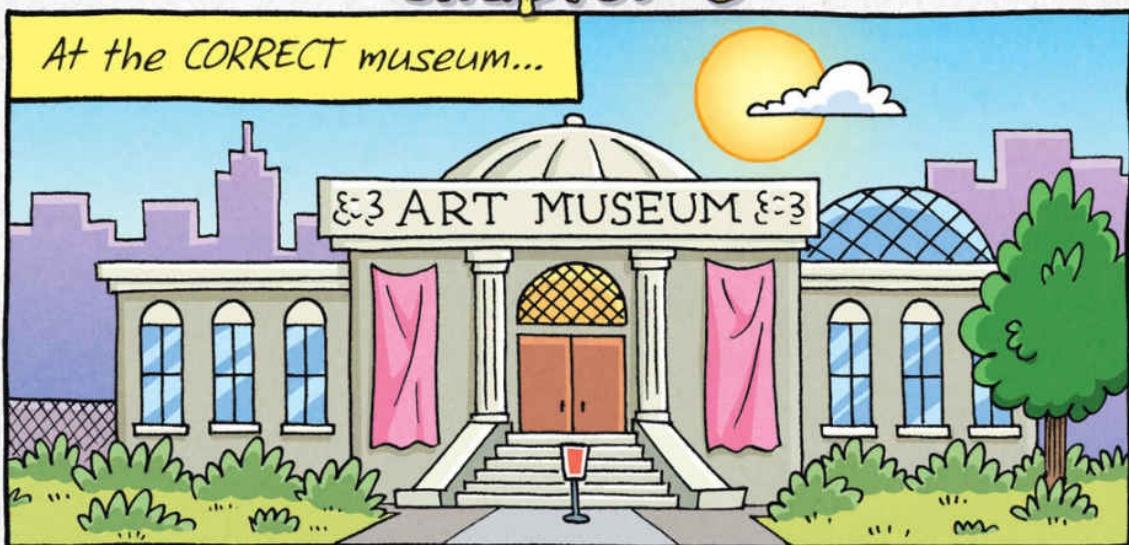


MANGO! This isn't the museum! It's the **MOO-SEUM!**



Chapter 8

At the CORRECT museum...



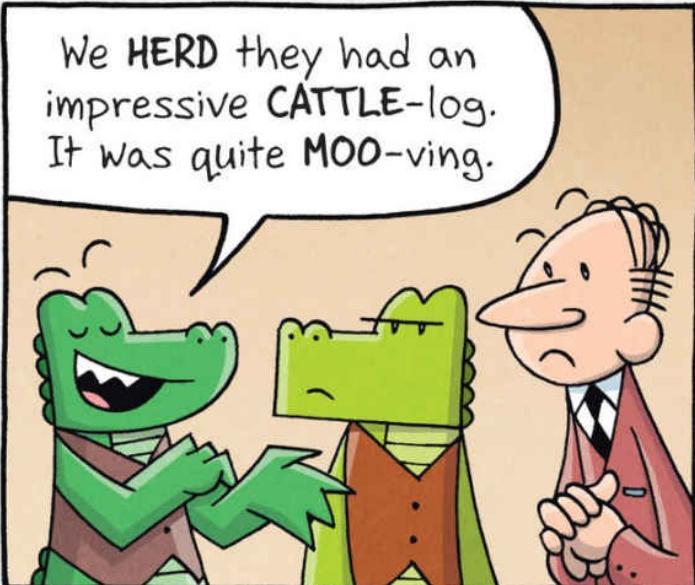
When T and P returned with yet another empty armored car, I feared the worst. But you've found **all** the missing paintings, just in time for the gala! I won't have to cancel it after all!



We would've been here sooner, but we went to the **UDDER** museum.



We **HERD** they had an impressive **CATTLE**-log. It was quite **MOO**-ving.



But we made sure to
HOOF it over before it
was PASTURE bedtime.

Don't MILK the
joke, Mango.



Thank you for recovering the art, InvestiGators.
Especially the Macaroni Ancheese piece.



It would've been **most embarrassing** if I had to tell
Macaroni I lost his painting to his face!

Don't worry, my
lips are sealed.





Mr. Snoot, while we recovered the art, whoever the thief was got away.

And?

And they might try to steal the paintings AGAIN. You should probably BEEF UP security.

Hey, you said no more cow jokes.

The art would be safer with InvestiGators on-site.

Invite YOU to the gala? I'm sorry, but this event has a reputation to uphold.

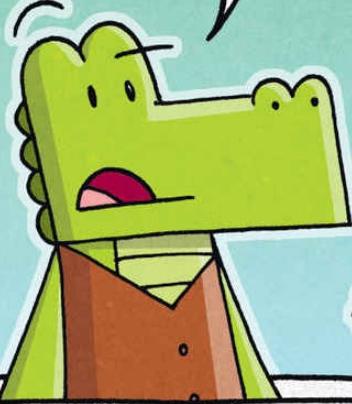
Only the brightest minds, most famous celebrities, richest moguls, and most prominent influencers are invited! And of course those clowns from the city council.

As grateful as the museum is that you found the art, your services are no longer required.



And what about the thief?

Well, they're not invited, either, obviously!



Now, if you'll excuse me, I have a lot of work to do.

People don't just come to the museum for the *VIEW*, you know.





Sadly, all the best artists were not appreciated in their lifetimes.

Modern artists don't have any discipline. They'd rather make art into a joke.

Like that Panksy.



More like **PRANK**sy! His idea of art is replacing the water in the park fountain with prune juice!

You got Panksy'd!



I told you you'd get your money AFTER the job was completed.



Well, that was YESTERDAY.
Things have CHANGED
since then.

If I don't pull this off
TONIGHT, then neither of
us gets ANYTHING!



What, really? Oh. Well, fine.
No one will know, trust me.
It will be our little secret.

Something tells me
that little secret will
be a **BIG DEAL!**



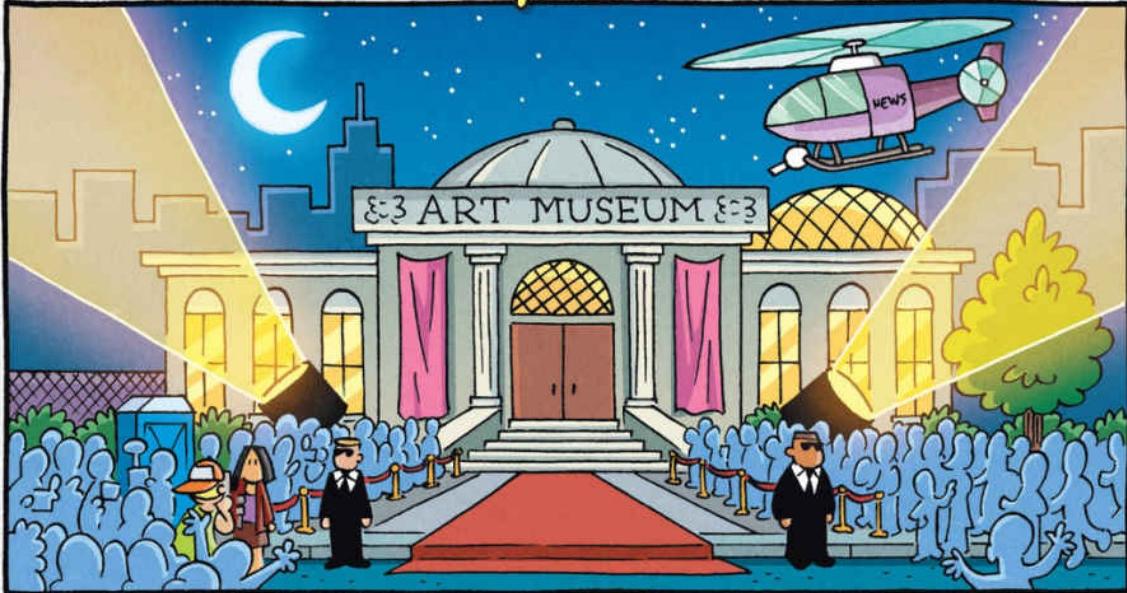
Now, Macaroni Ancheese is a **TRUE** artist. He's clearly
studied and respects the works by the masters.
I look forward to meeting him at the gala.







Chapter 9



This is Cici Boringstories with Action News Now, reporting LIVE from outside the city Art Museum Gala! I'm filling in for Vohnda, the Culture Vulture, who's out sick with avian flu.



I don't care much for boring old art, but I'll never pass up an opportunity for **celebrity gawking**. Catching a glimpse of a famous face is quite a competition amongst the paparazzi!





It's Aubergine Brassica, the romantic lead from
COLE'S LAW: THE MOVIE!



Congrats on the hit film!
Are you excited to see any
particular work of art
at the exhibit?



I myself am a work
of art at the exhibit!
ACTING is **MY** art.



And now I'm going to **ACT** my way
toward the next photographer!

Over here,
Aubergine!



Make sure you
get my good side.

Who's next on the red carpet?

It's Bill N. Dollaz, the richest man in the city! And probably other cities, too!



Mr. Dollaz! Do you think the monetary value placed on fine art limits its accessibility to only the wealthy elite like yourself?

Anyone can afford fine art if they **SAVE UP** by shopping at my stores.

You can always count on the **Dollaz Discount™!**

Good advice as always from the top .0001 percent.

Another limo! Will it be another movie star?
A pop singer? Or an even BIGGER celebrity,
like a children's book author?



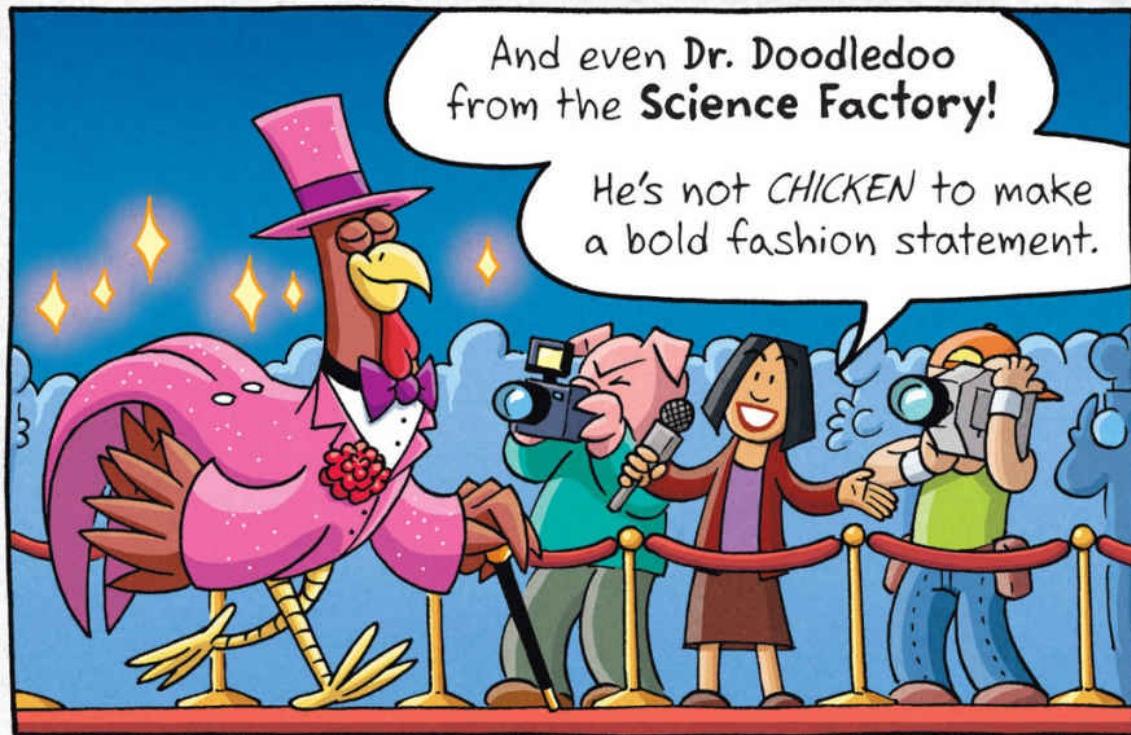
It's...the **city council**? Well, I guess public figures like politicians could be considered celebrities.

More like **clowns**, if you ask me!

HEY! Not ALL politicians are clowns!

Yeah, just Councilman Fluffles!

Balloon animal?





The next celebrity arriving is...



...VOHNDA FEATHERNECK?!



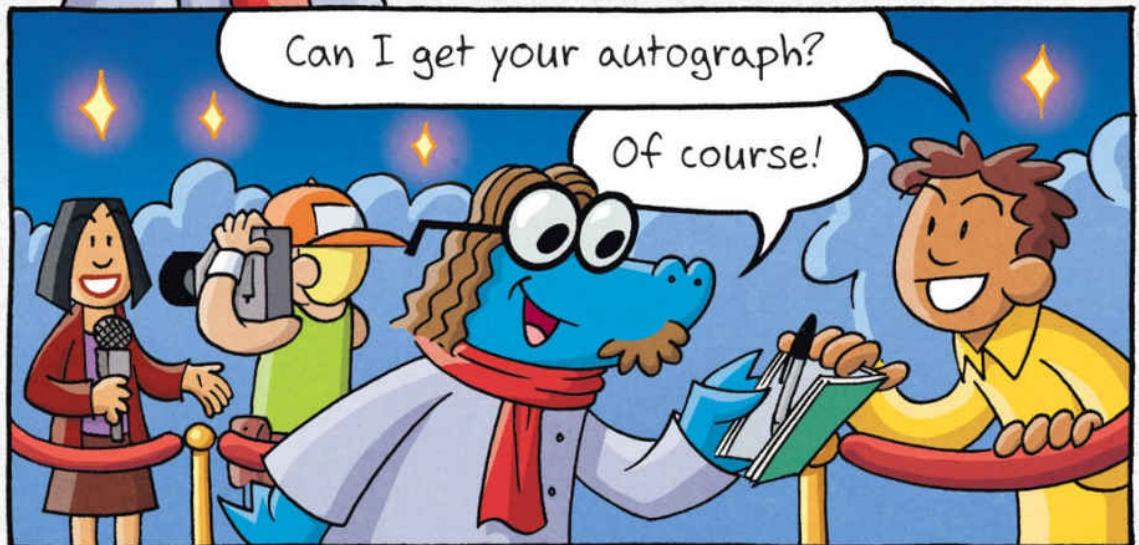
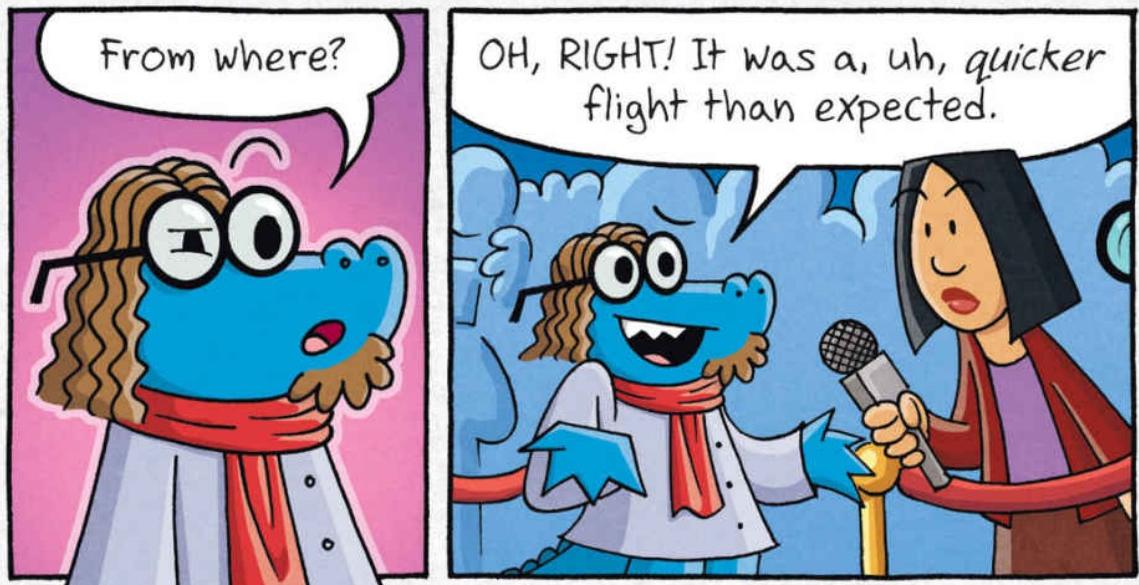
Shouldn't you be at home in bed?



I was invited to the gala, of course!
I'M the arts and culture correspondent.

You said you had
INFLUENZA!

No, I said I'm an
INFLUENCER!







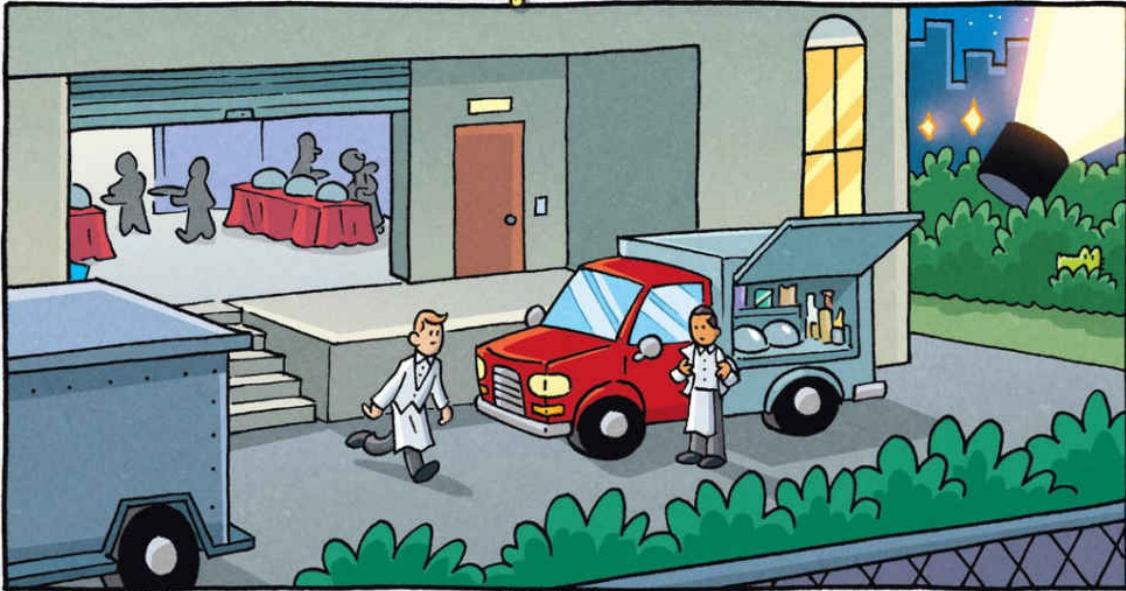
Wow, look at all the people. And the detail! Now that I'm an artist, I can appreciate just how much work goes into drawing a page like this.

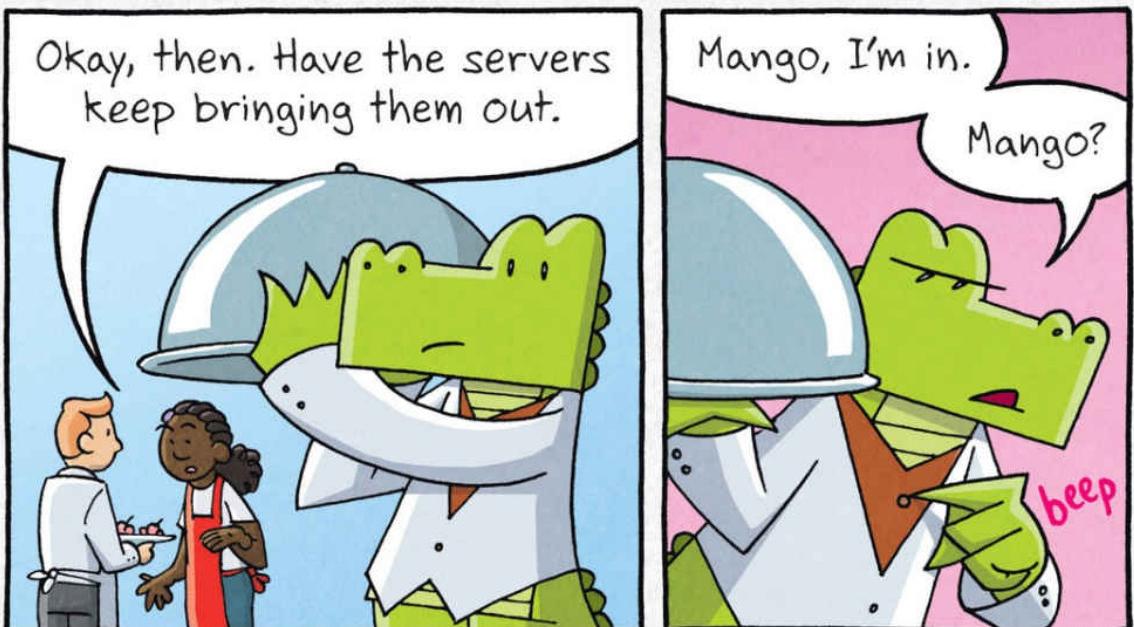
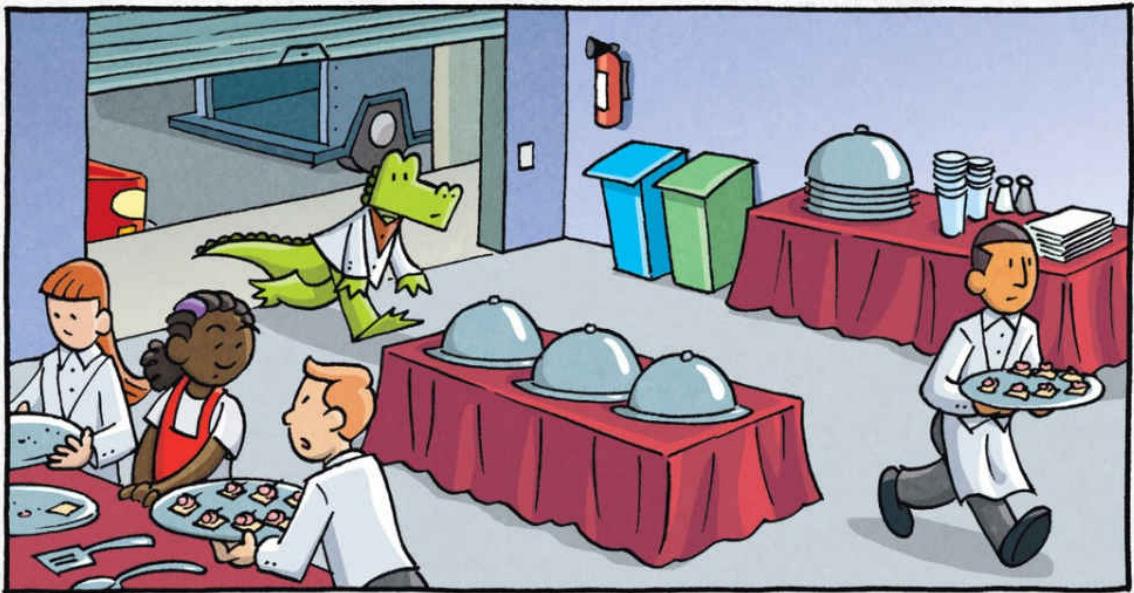


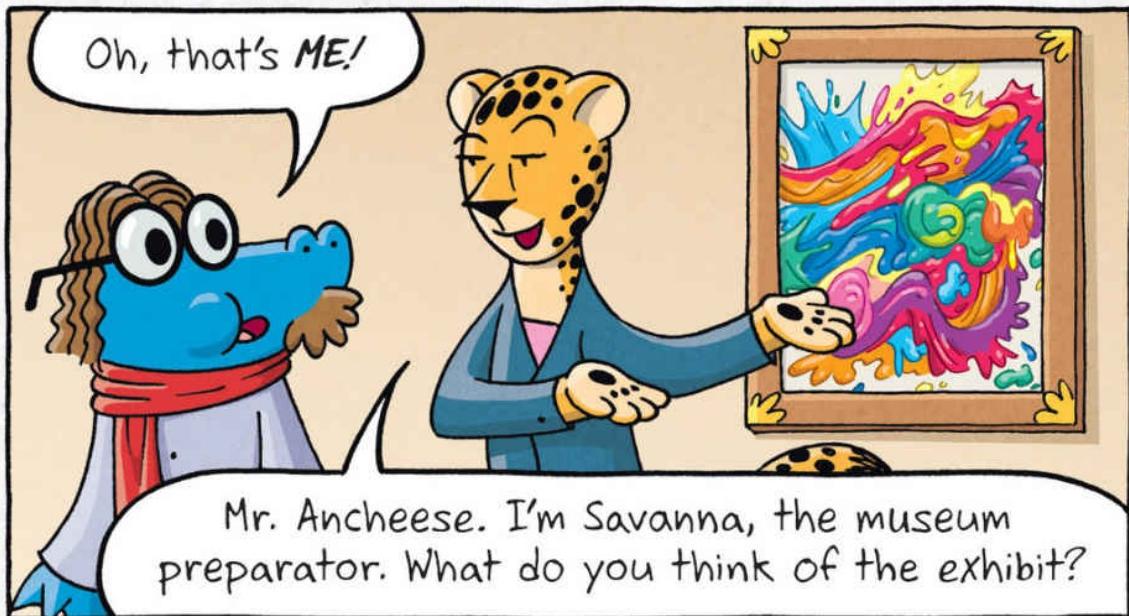
I hope the scene of Brash sneaking into the gala is easier to draw.



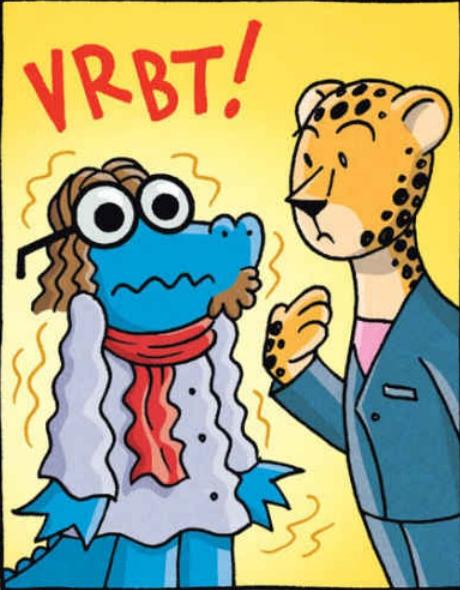
Chapter 10







The weather is much warmer in Lamparugalightswitchland. That's why I'm wearing this scarf and am, uh...blue.



Mango? Why won't he answer?



What do you think you're doing?

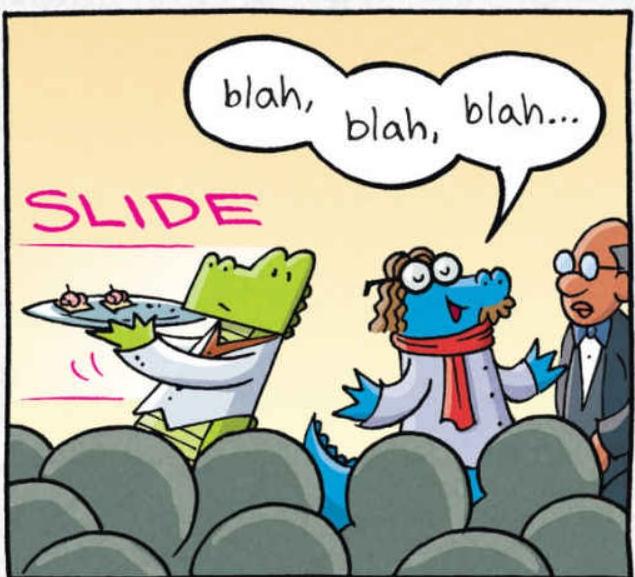


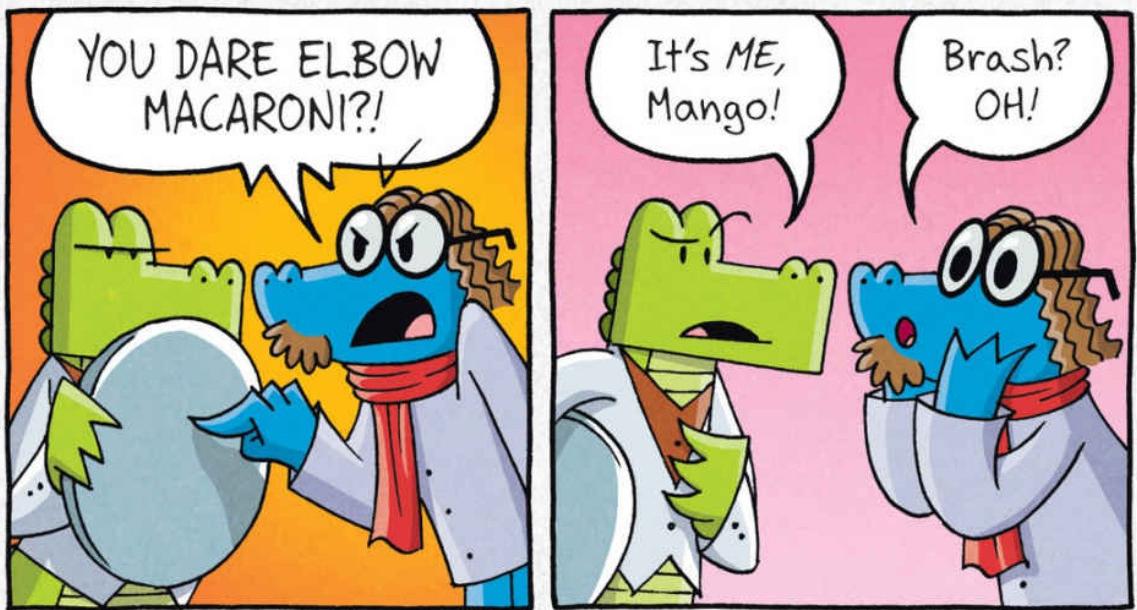
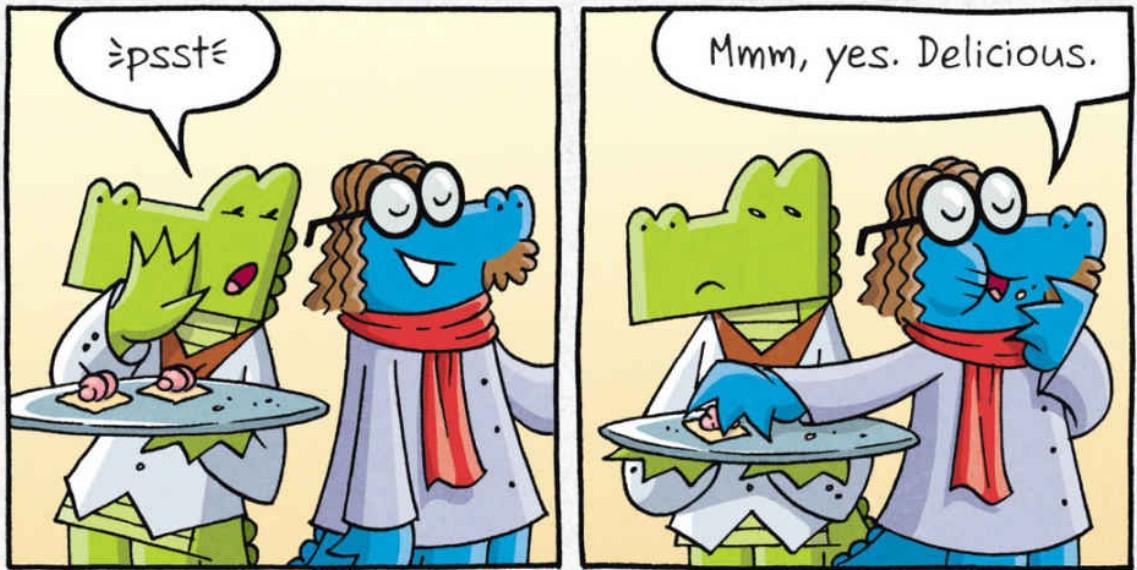
Get out there and serve those hors d'oeuvres! They won't stay fresh forever.

And remember, they're for the GUESTS only!

Er, yes, boss!

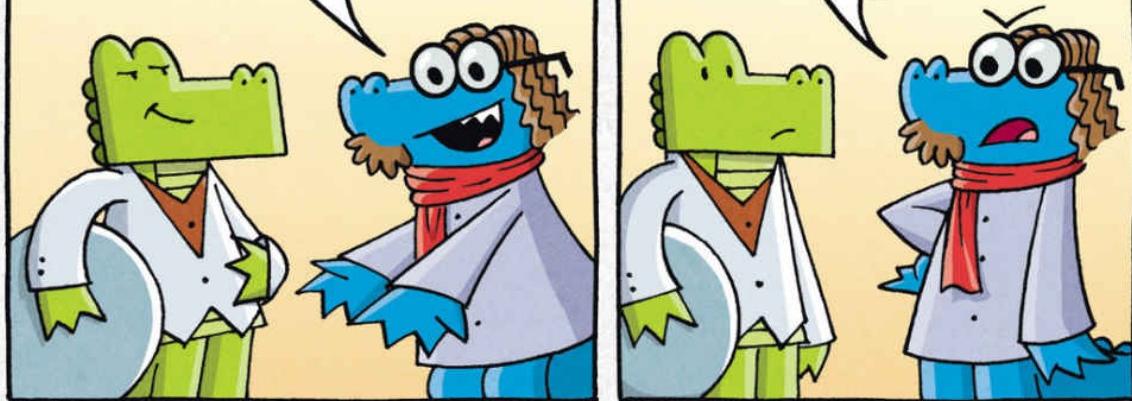






NOW I get it. "WAIT and see." You're a WAITER!
An **InvestiWAITER**.

You sure made me WAIT
a long time for THAT
setup to pay off!

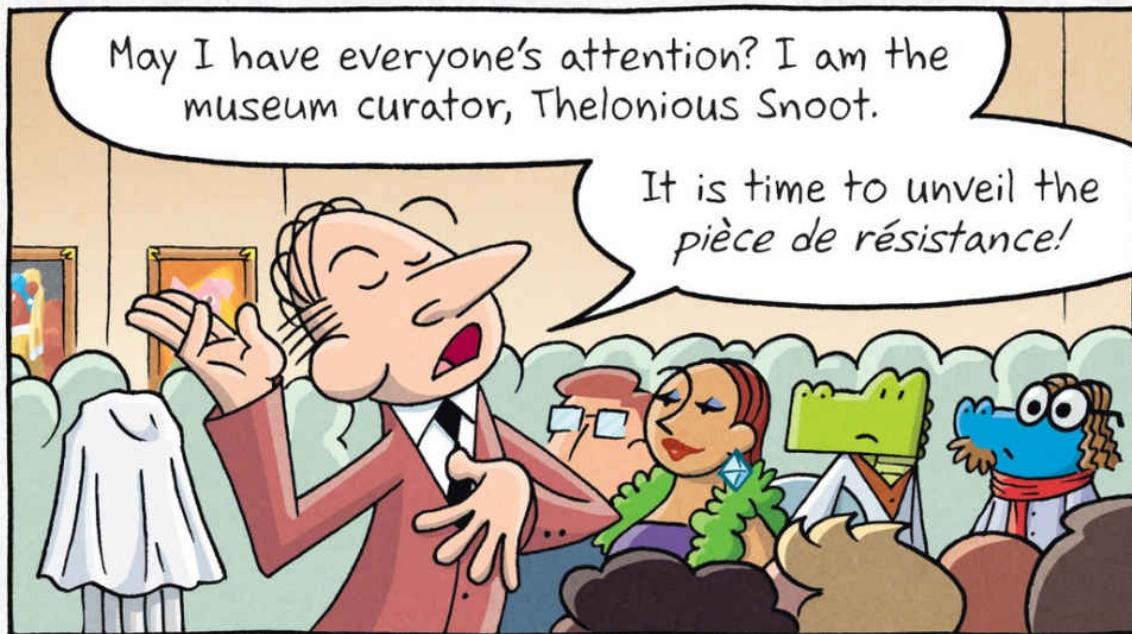


Remember, **MACARONI**, we're not here for hobnobbing
and finger food. Keep your eyes peeled for anything
or any**ONE** suspicious.

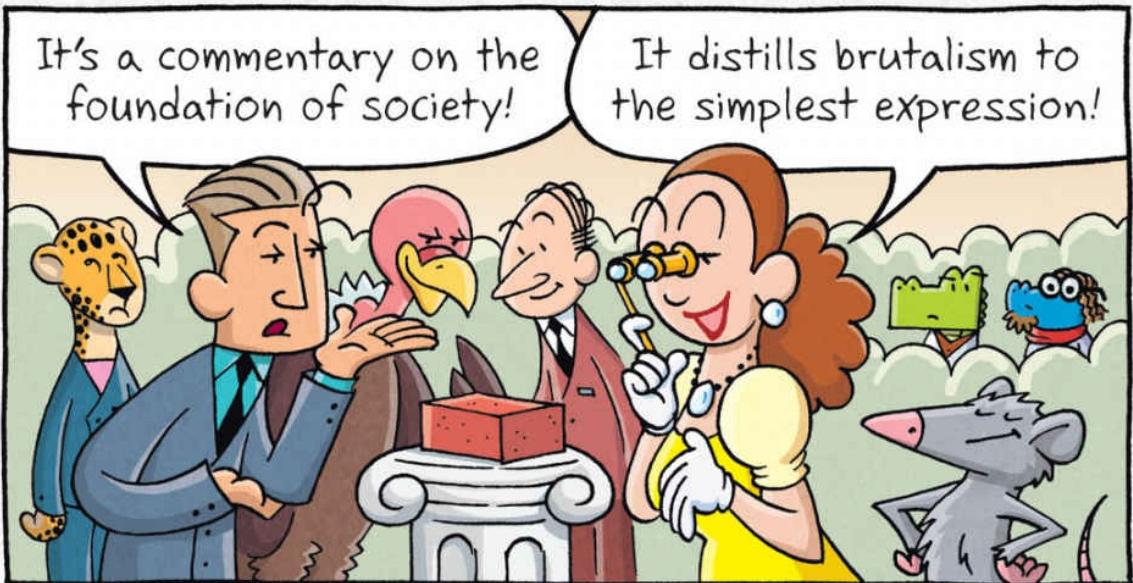


May I have everyone's attention? I am the
museum curator, Thelonious Snoot.

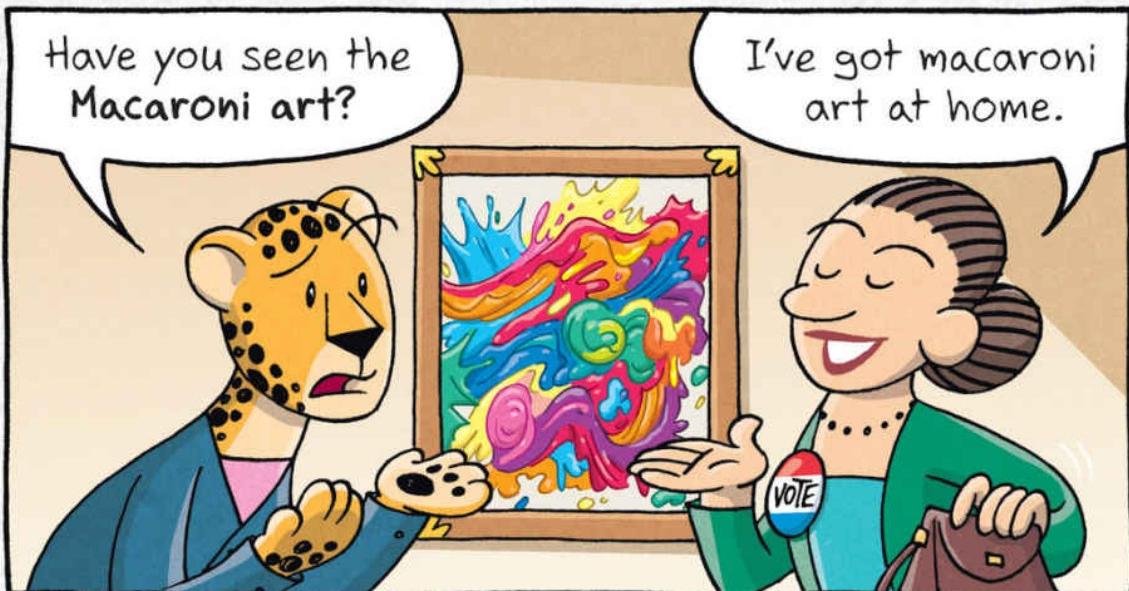
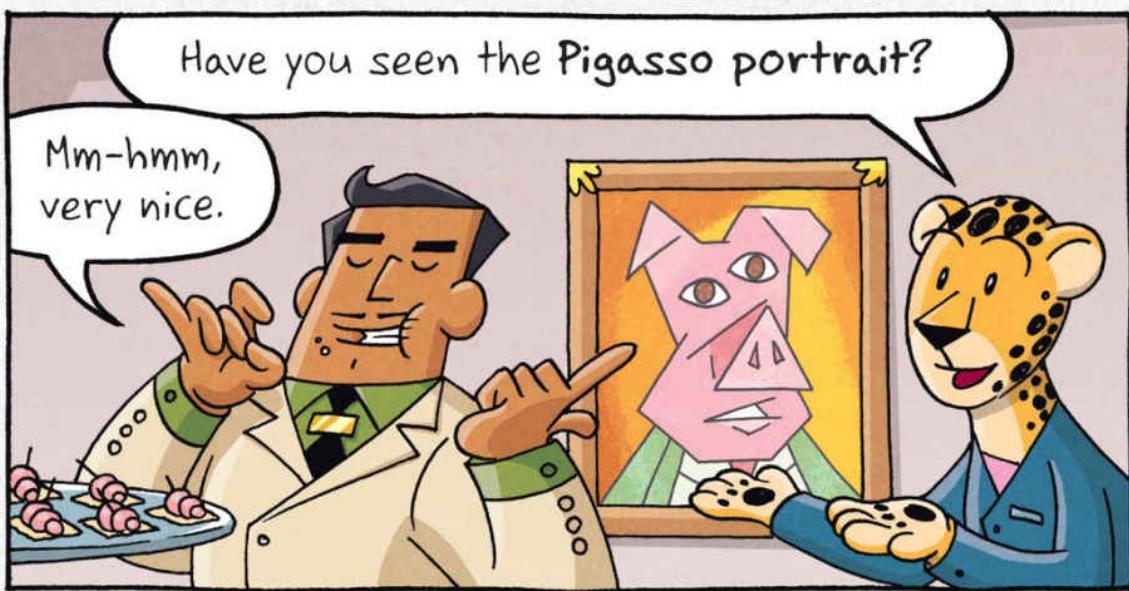
It is time to unveil the
pièce de résistance!

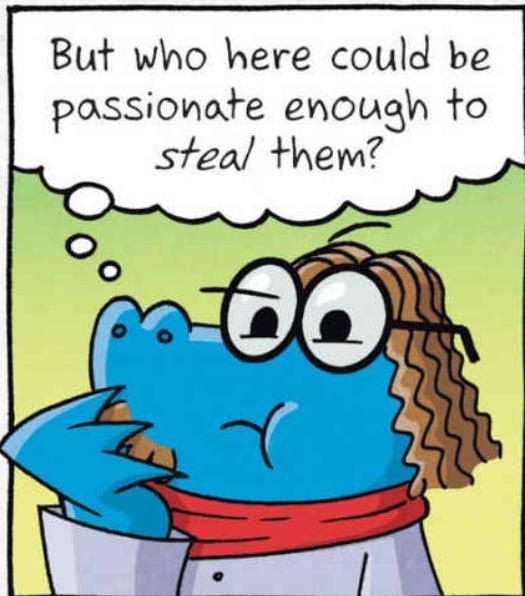
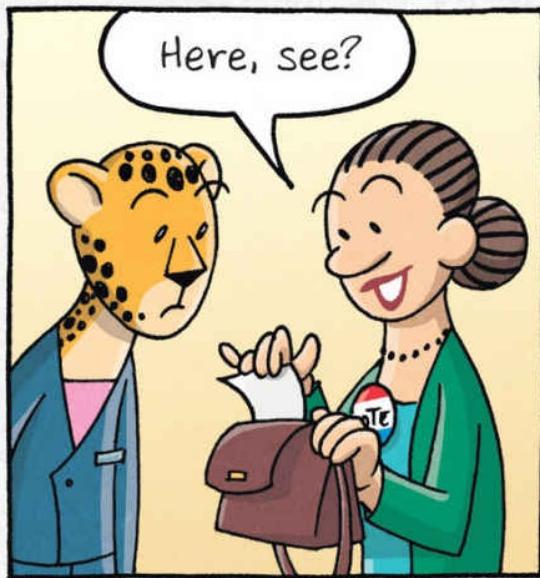






Chapter 11





I didn't create that brick. I found it in the road.
But by putting it on a pedestal and calling it art,
I made people **REACT**.



Take this "**Bona Lisa**." Sure, it
was made with skill and talent.
But what does it **SAY**?

Um...
Bark? Woof?
BOW WOW?



Exactly! **BOW DOWN** to
the art snobs who
decide what's "good
enough" to belong
in a museum.



How many of those
have you served?

Uh...all of them?



Do these hors d'oeuvres taste funny to you?

Are you asking me because I'm a clown?



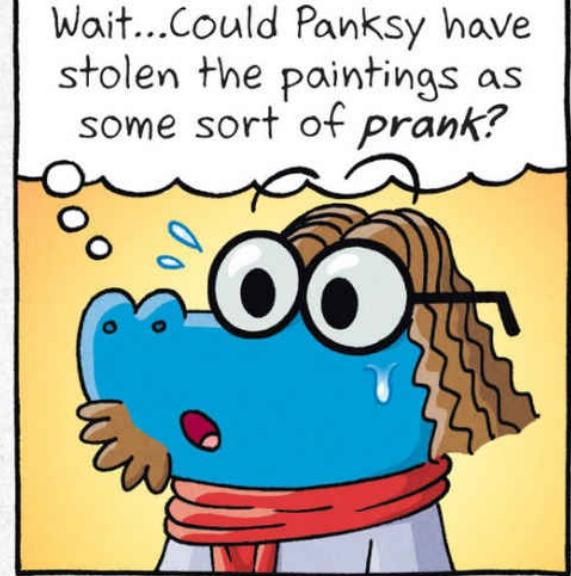
This place is full of phonies. I'm fed up!

So am I. **URP!** I think I've had too many hors d'oeuvres!

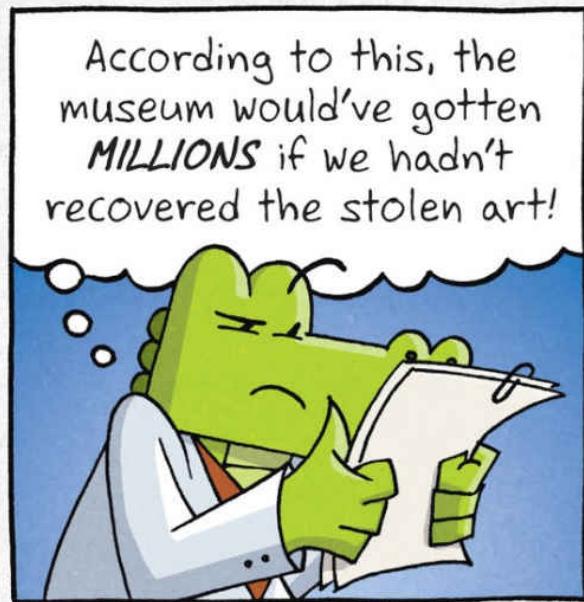
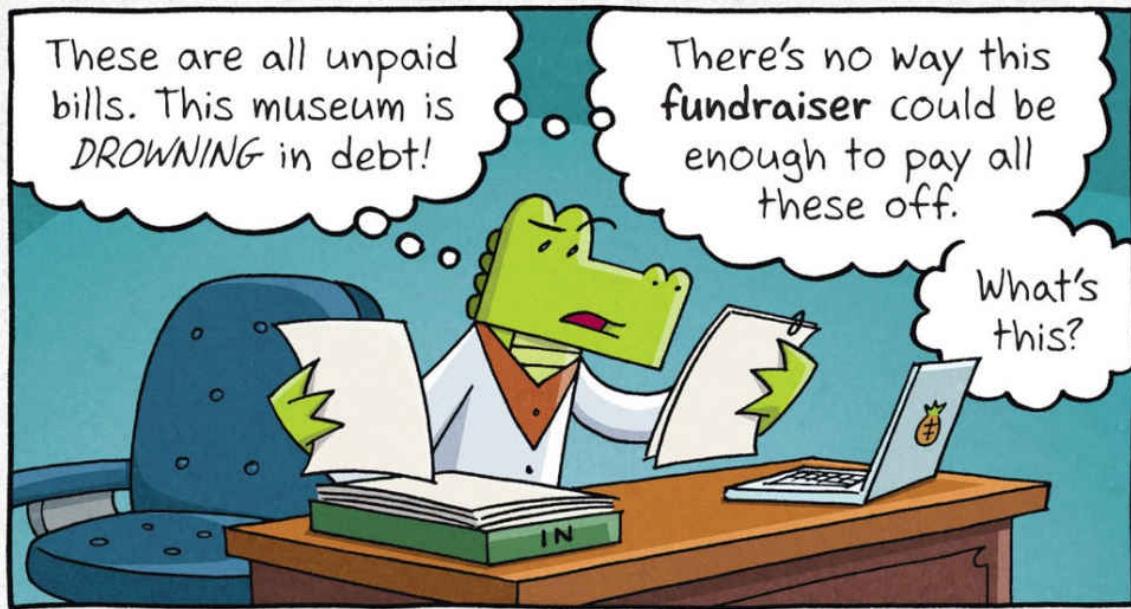


It's all commercial now. I just slap my name on things and it's art.

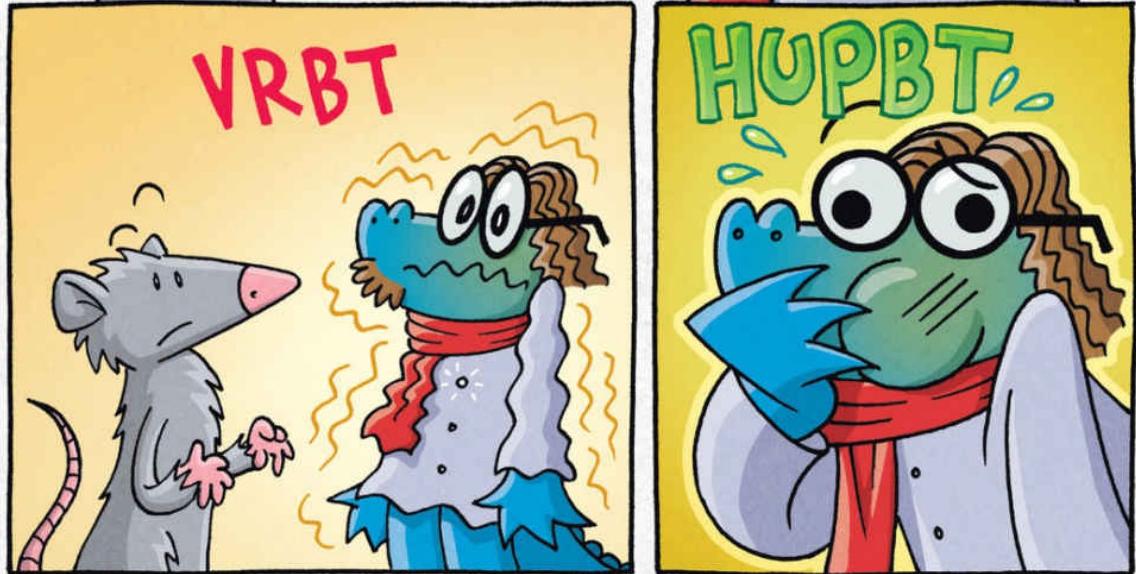
Wait... Could Panksy have stolen the paintings as some sort of prank?







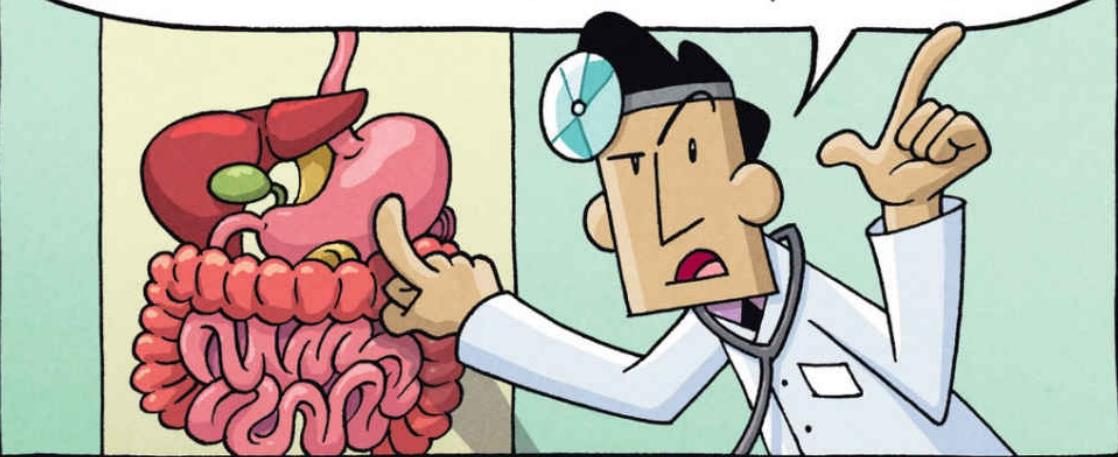




**WE INTERRUPT THIS COMIC FOR A
PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT.**

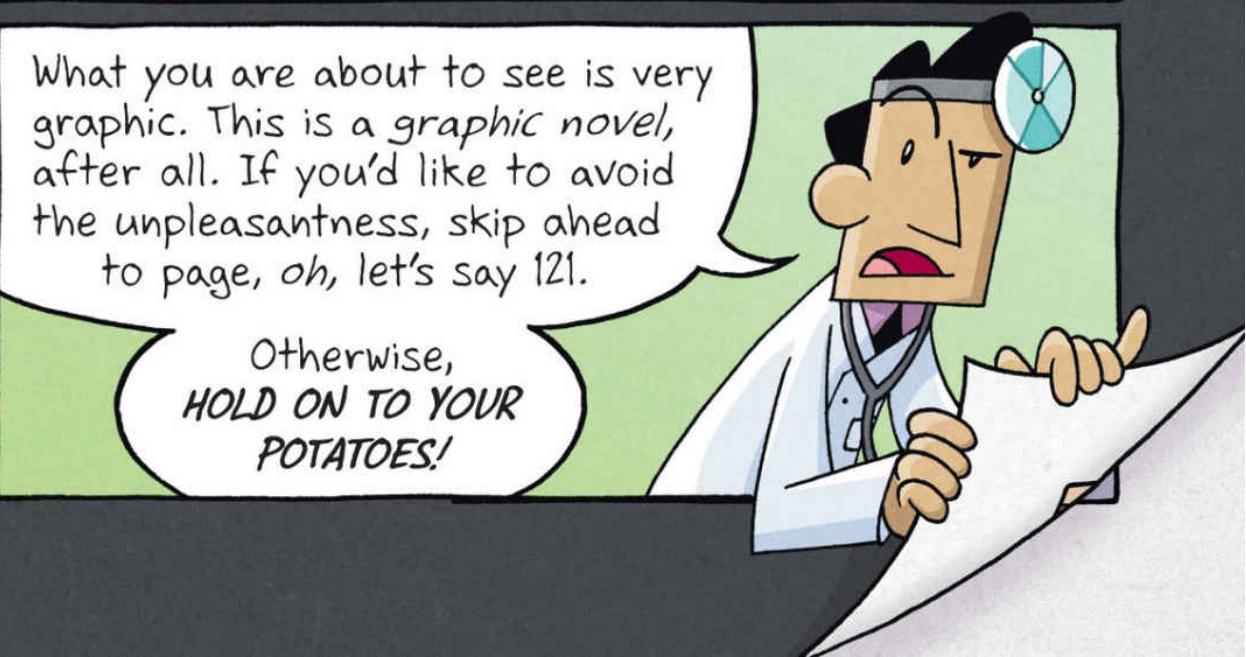


As a brain surgeon, I know a lot about stomachs. Because some people *THINK* with their stomachs. And on the next few pages, everyone will be *TALKING* with their stomachs...if you catch my meaning.

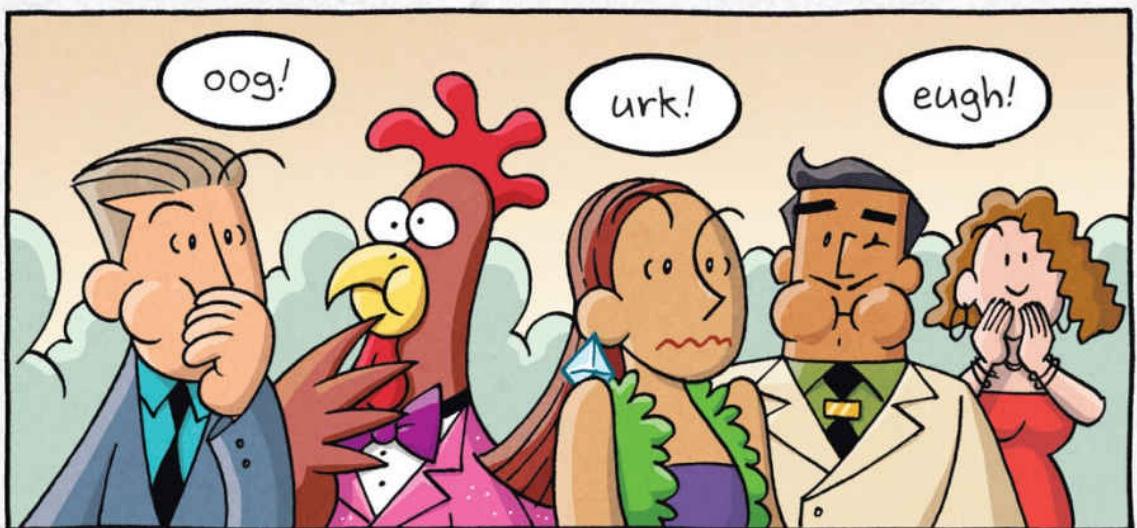


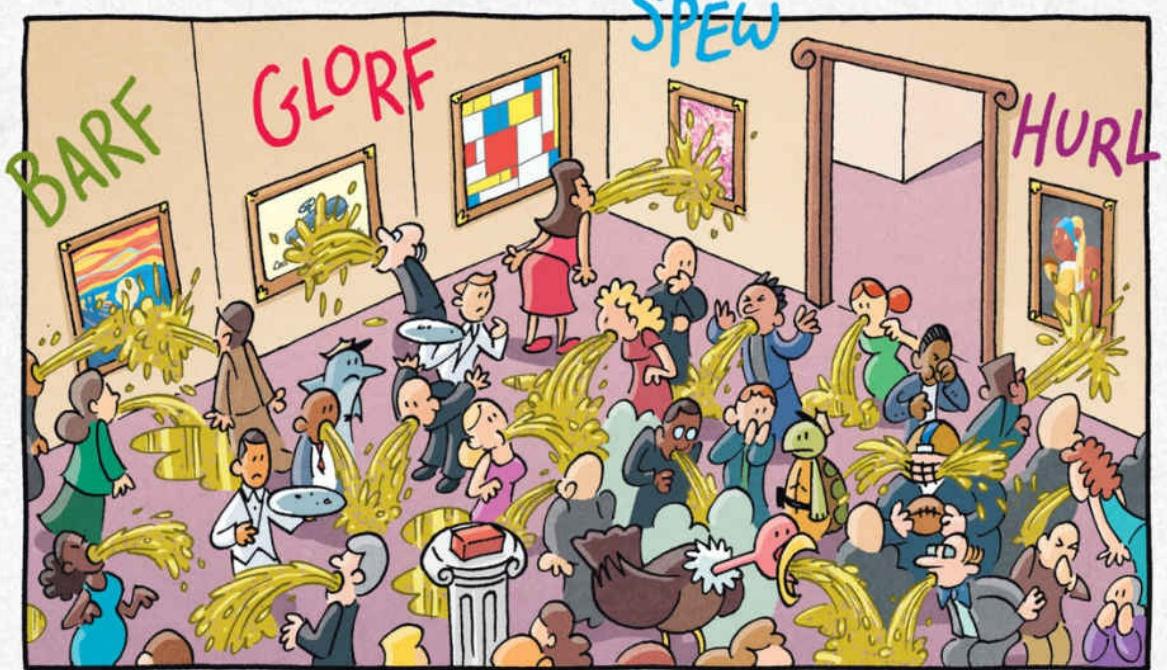
What you are about to see is very graphic. This is a graphic novel, after all. If you'd like to avoid the unpleasantness, skip ahead to page, oh, let's say 121.

Otherwise,
**HOLD ON TO YOUR
POTATOES!**

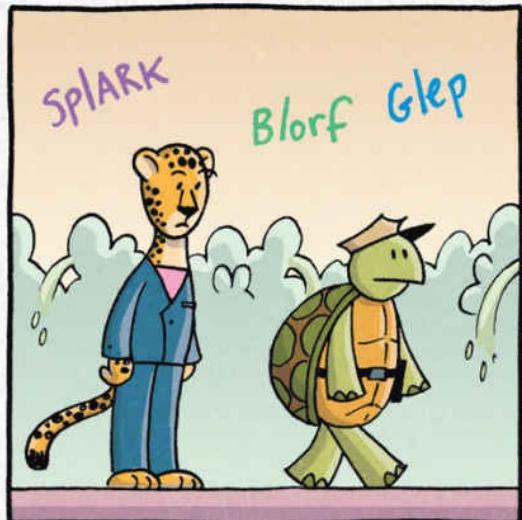








Todd! I mean, Paul! We have to evacuate the building before everyone **BARFS** on **ALL THE PAINTINGS!**
Pull the fire alarm!





Food poisoning AND fire.
This night just keeps
getting **better!**

INSURANCE
POLICY

Hmm... The caterer MUST be who Snoot was talking
with on the phone about a *little secret*!

How deep does this
conspiracy go?

CURATOR
T. SNOOT

There's no fire, everyone, but please exit the
building before any more food exits your body.

No fire? That's a relief.
I'd better make sure Mango's safe!

Chapter 12

Let's see what's on the news, eh, Lock?



A WAVE OF VOMIT!

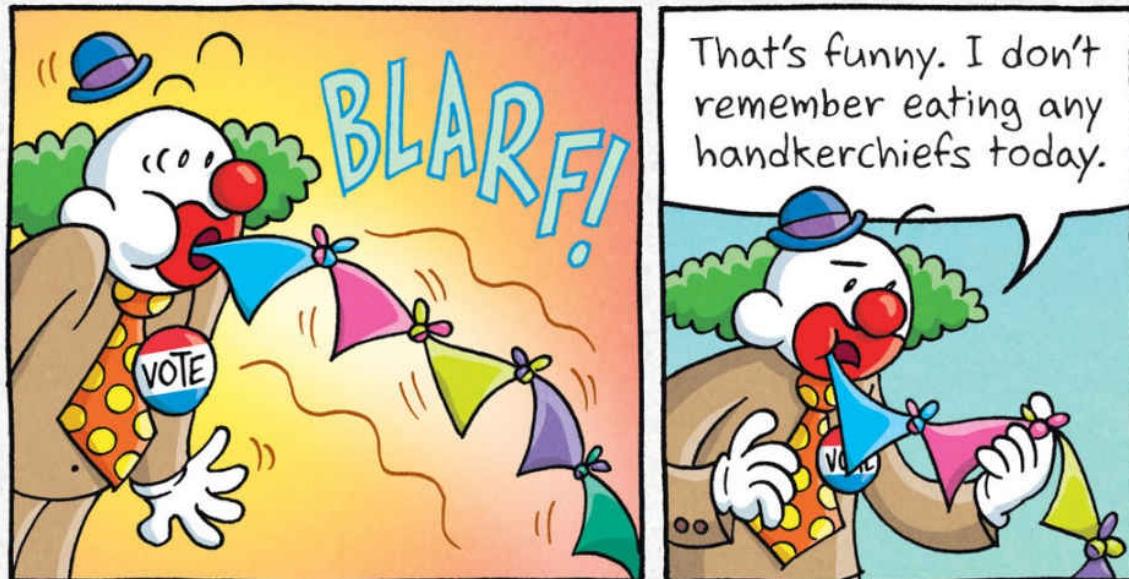
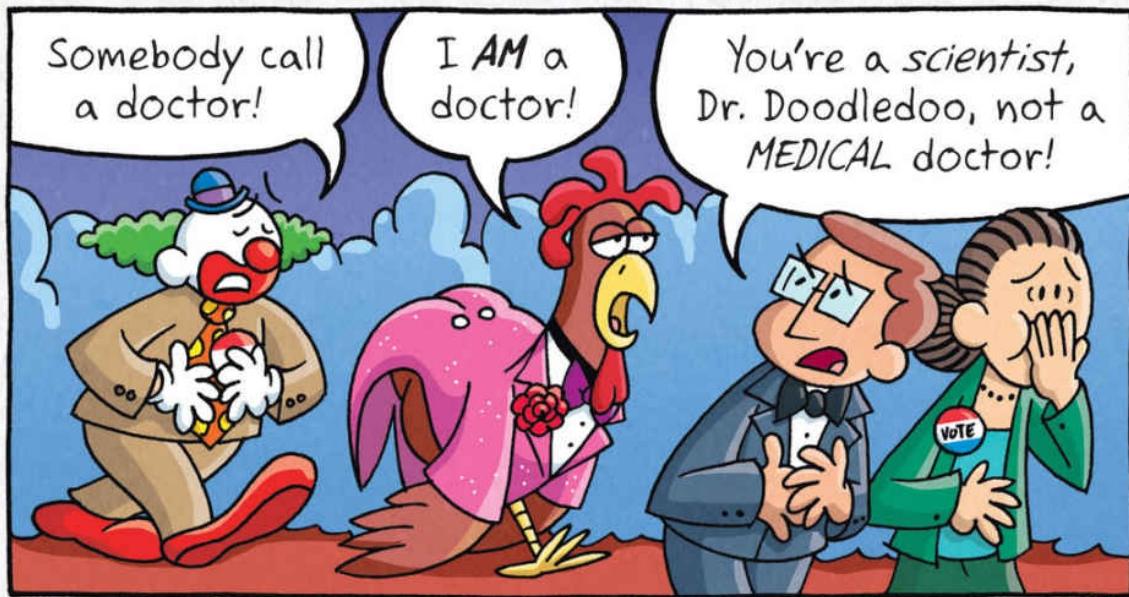


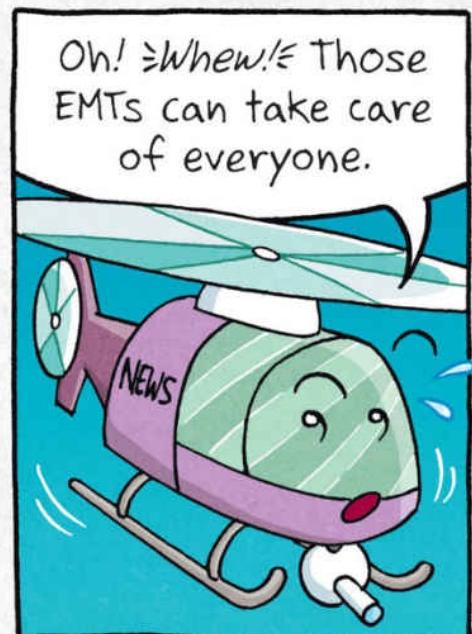
Nope, I'm out. Time for your walk!



This is Cici Boringstories with Action Spews Now—I mean, **NEWS** Now! Guests of tonight's gala are pouring out of the museum, along with **PUKE** pouring out of their mouths!









Hey, Lance, have you seen
COLE'S LAW: THE MOVIE?

I did, Amber.
What'd ya think?

Can you believe that
part where we found out
who his parents are?

Yeah, and that
his **partner** wasn't
actually dead?

MANGO!
Are you all
right?

Go help
somebody
else!

Well, **SOMEONE'S**
feeling better.

Artists!
Such divas!

The curator and caterer are in cahoots! He had the art insured for MILLIONS in case of theft, but since we foiled that plan she decided to sabotage the gala by POISONING THE HORS D'OEUVRES!



...then that means the art is COMPLETELY UNGUARDED! What if this was just a distraction so it can be stolen again?

We've got to get back inside, quick! We can take a shortcut by flushing ourselves into the sewer!



Porta-potties aren't connected to the sewer, Mango!

We'll just have to push through the crowd. Hurry!

Oh, right.

Okay, just not TOO fast.



But they won't escape the
InvestiGators!

Nice to see your
true colors, Mango.

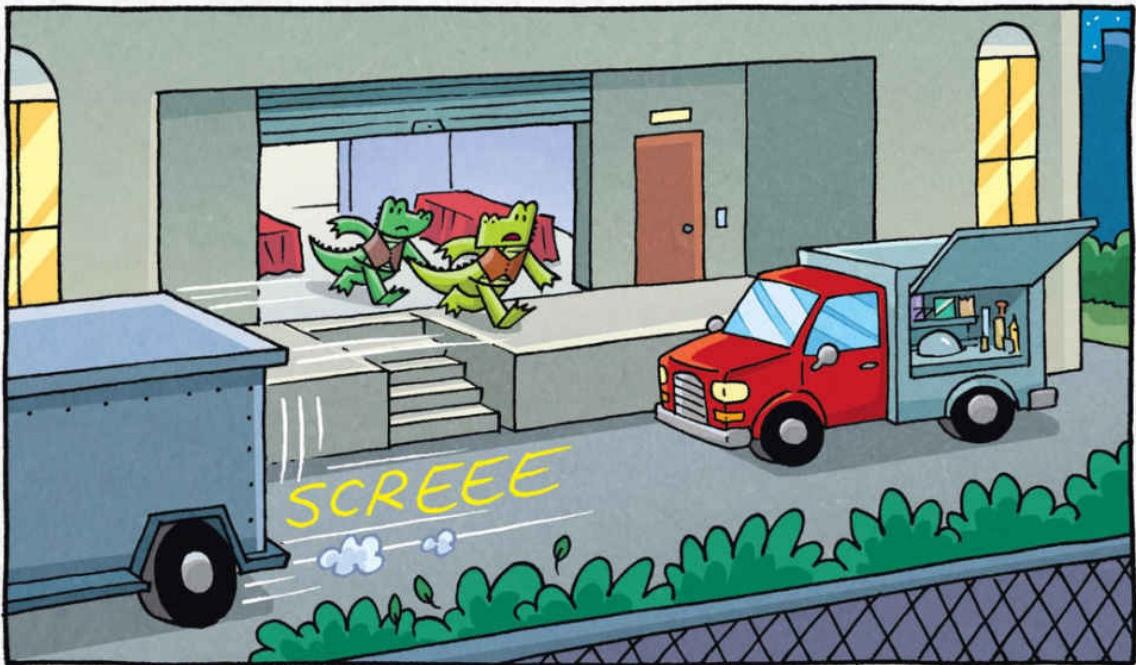
It's good to be myself again, Brash... Even if I am still a little rumbly in my tumbly.

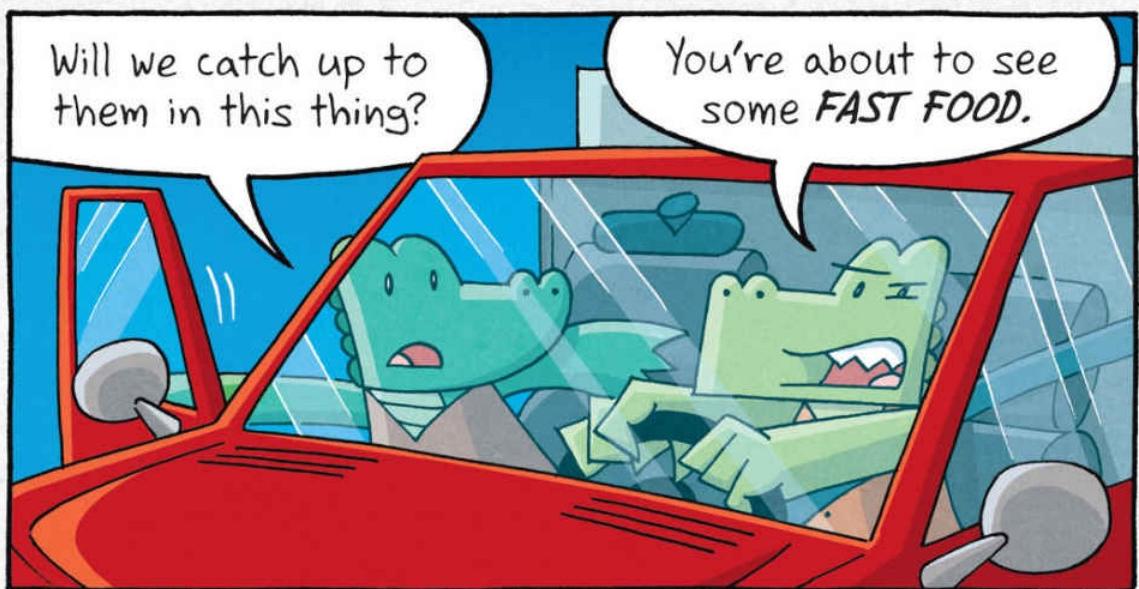
The thief must've taken the art out through the staff entrance.



LET'S GO! They can't have gotten far!

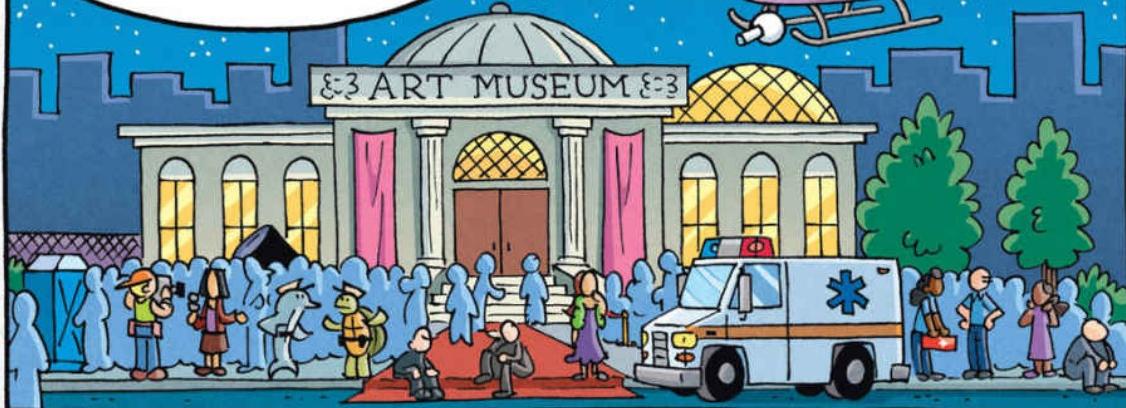
Now I know how you felt for most of book two, Brash!





Chapter 13

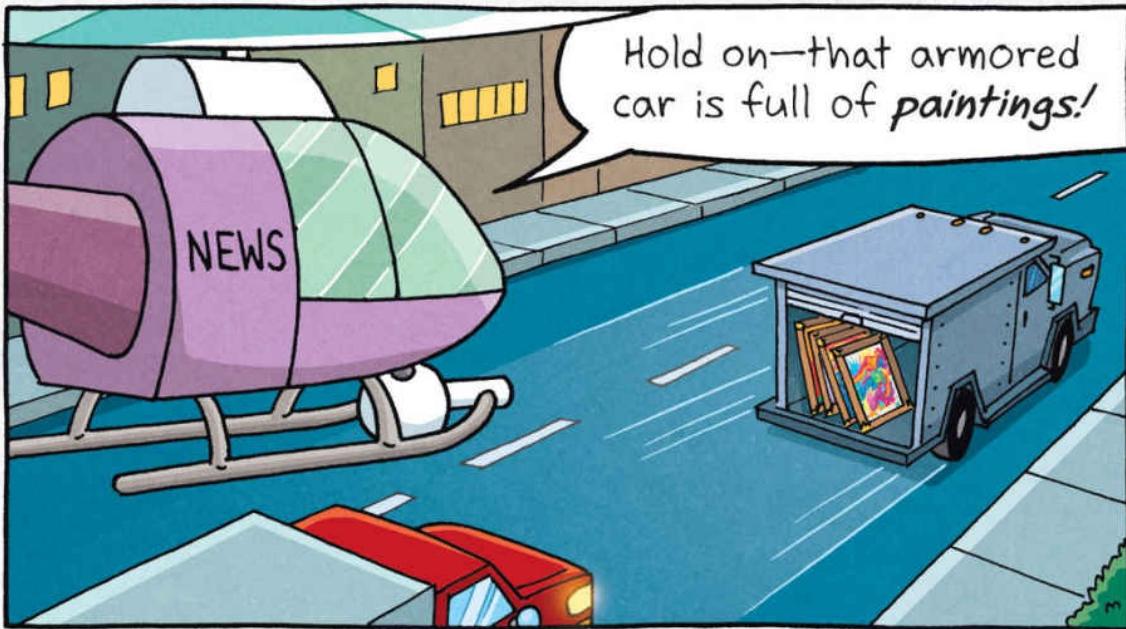
YAWN! It seems like the excitement might be over, folks.

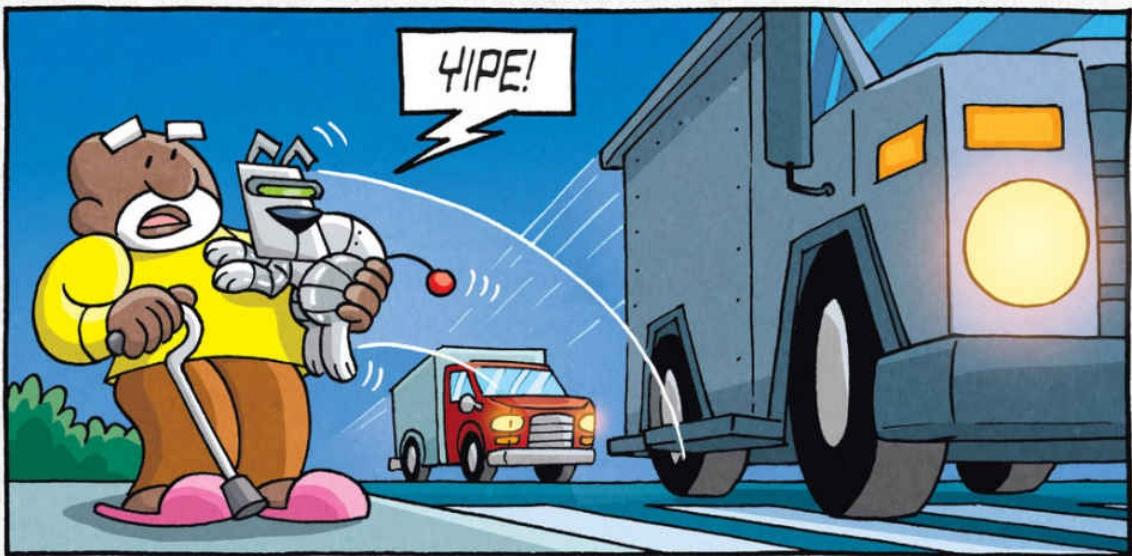
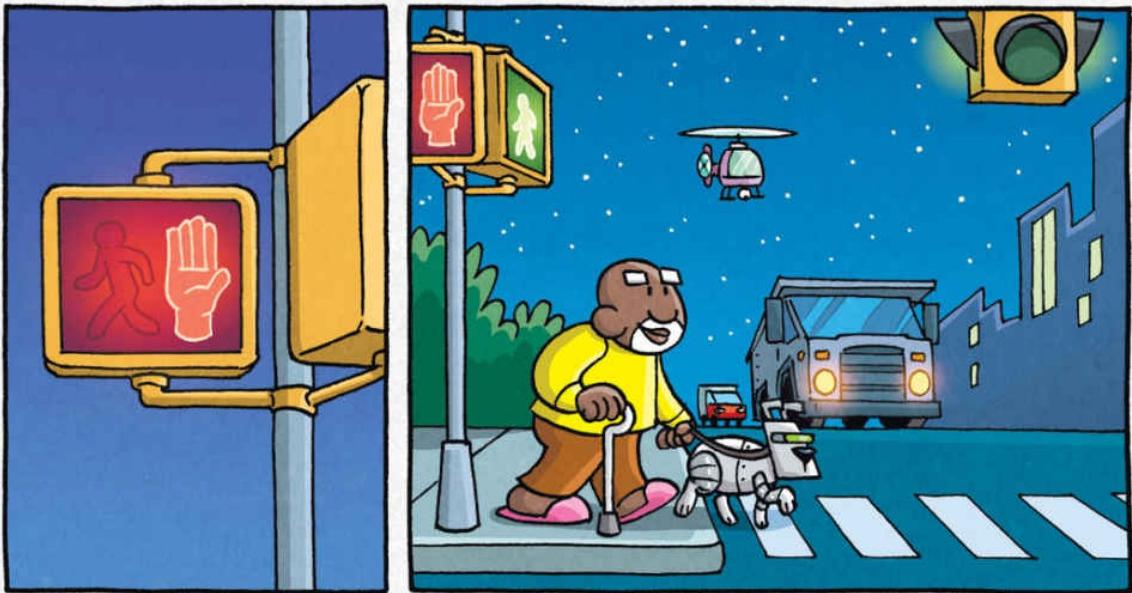


What's this? A car chase! Now THAT'S newsworthy!



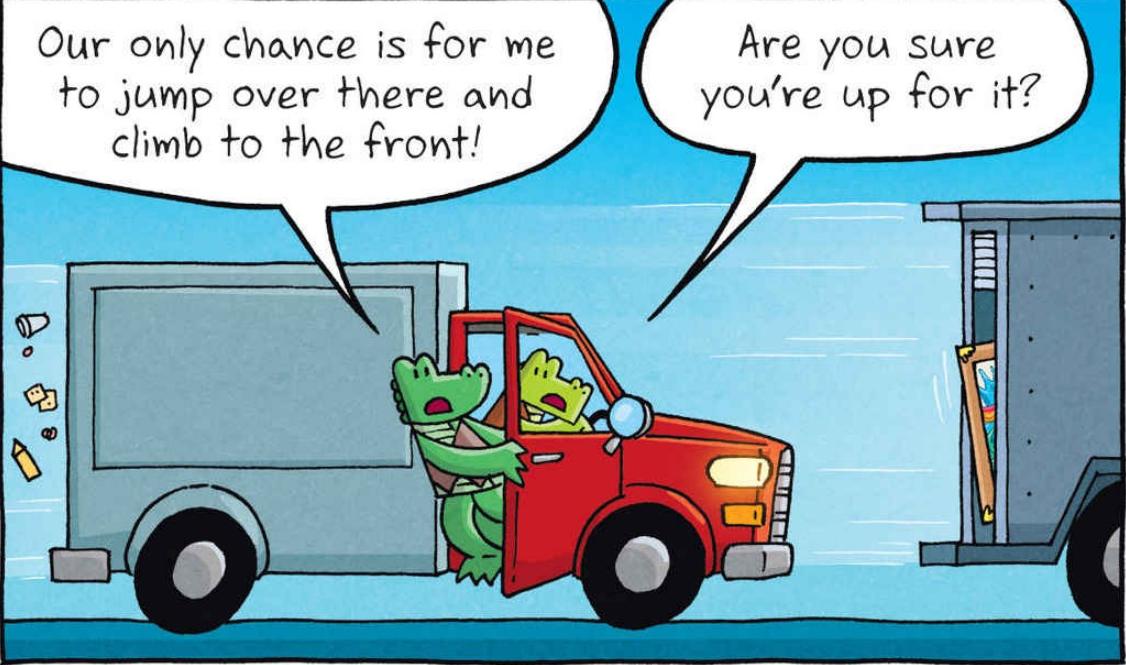
Hold on—that armored car is full of paintings!







We've gotta stop this thief before they run someone over! Or WORSE!



Our only chance is for me to jump over there and climb to the front!

Are you sure you're up for it?



Trust me! I feel a lot better!



SCREEECH!



I feel like some days life
is passing me by.



Yep. And other days,
it hits you like—



HEY! SLOW DOWN!

WHAO! Look at
that van go!

VROOM



WHEW! That was close!

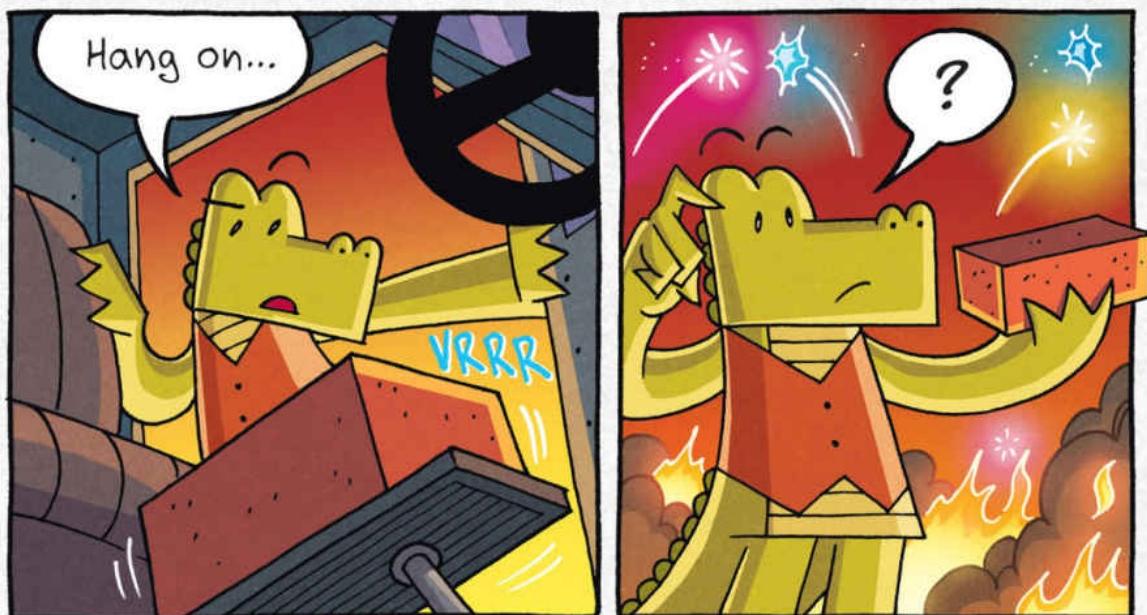


WAIT! It's going to
crash into the—









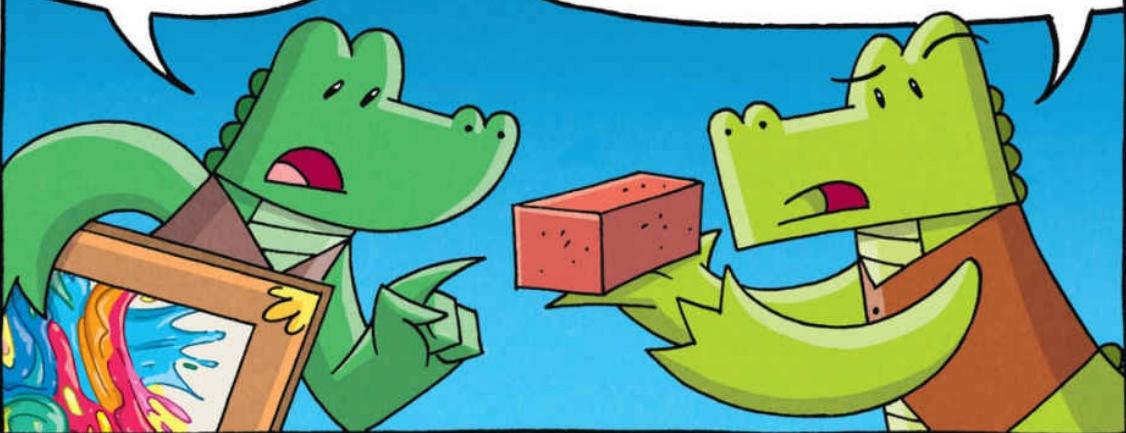
What happened to the thief? Don't tell me—

No one was driving, Mango! This **brick** was wedged onto the gas pedal!



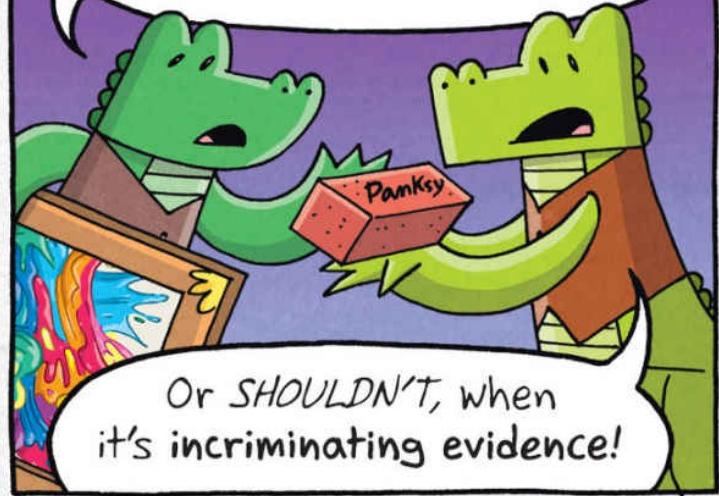
That's PANKSY'S
brick!

How can you tell? There are
bricks all over the place.



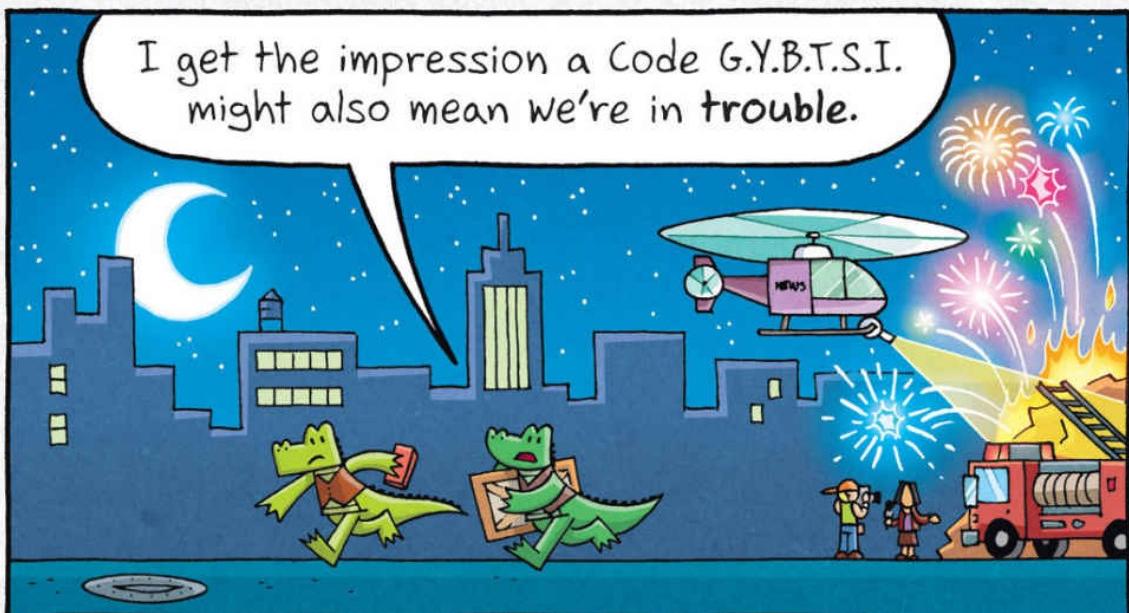
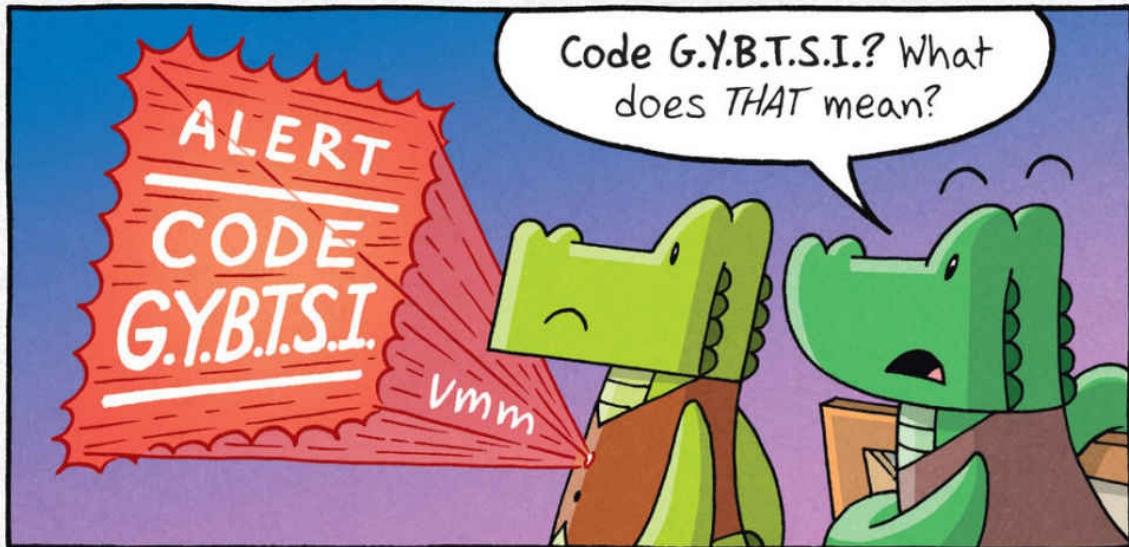
flip
Panksy

Like I said. An artist should
always sign their work.



Or **SHOULDN'T**, when
it's incriminating evidence!





Chapter 14







But, as an artist,
you should always
sign your work.



Oh, I did, sir. I signed
my name right—



Huh? It's GONE!



My signature's missing!



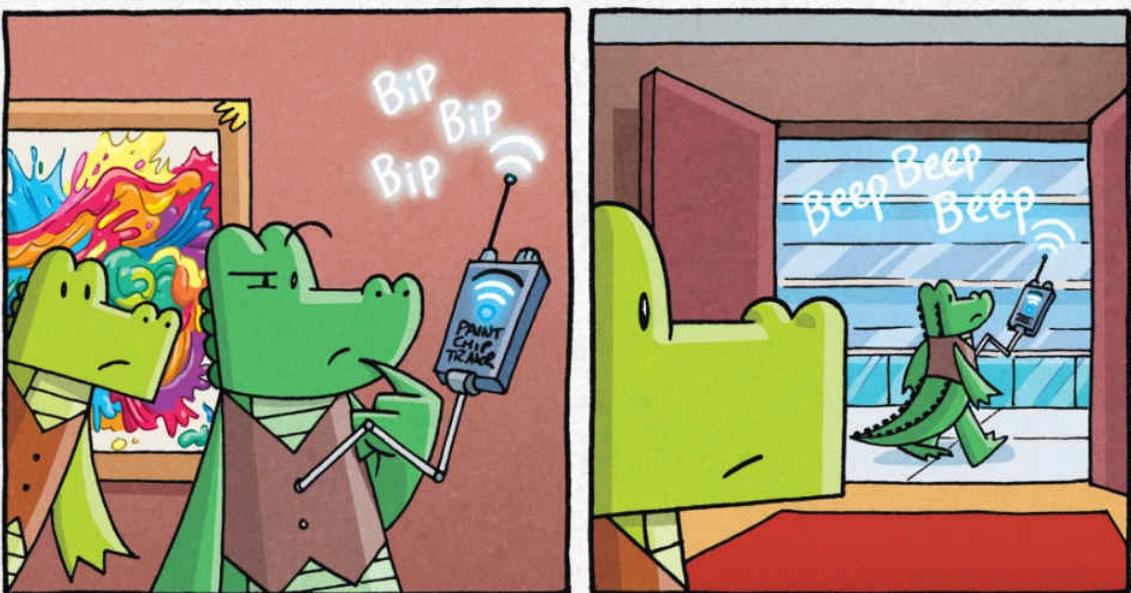
Let me take
a look...



Hmm...







We find it the same way we did last time, Brash.
By following this tracker to my REAL painting!



The thief must have driven away with the **real art** in a **DIFFERENT** truck while we chased after the one with the **forgeries!**

It was a **decoy!** And we fell for it.

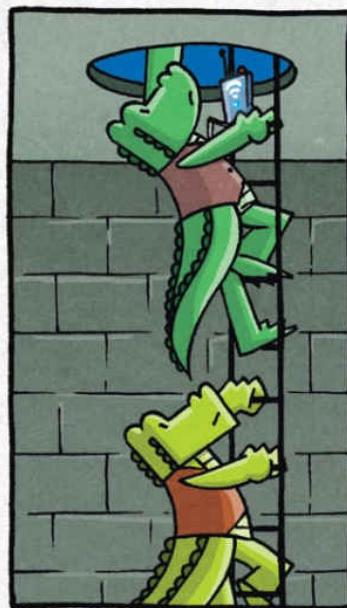
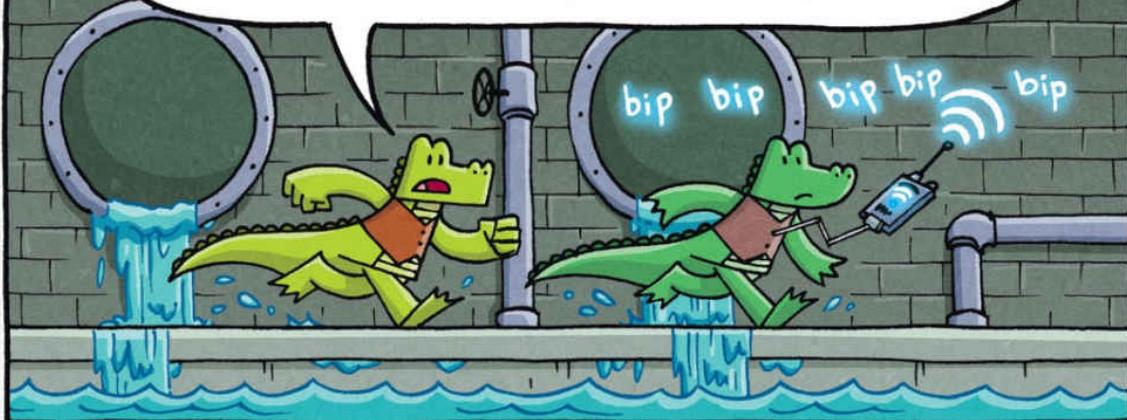
Well, we won't get fooled again. And they won't see us coming!

TO THE SEWER, MANGO!

This may be a fake...but it still...transports me. I can feel that ocean breeze!

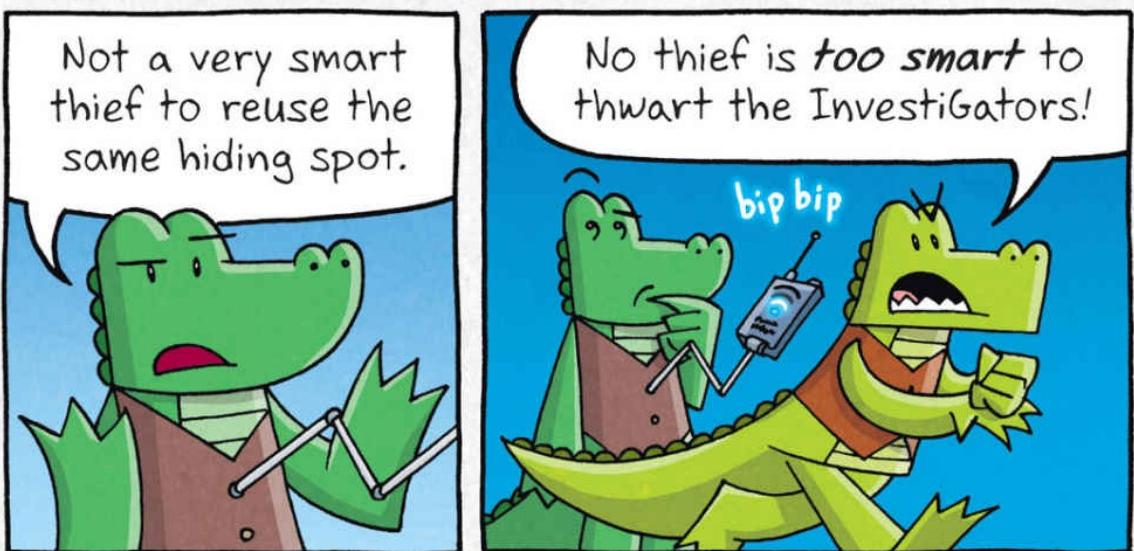
Chapter 15

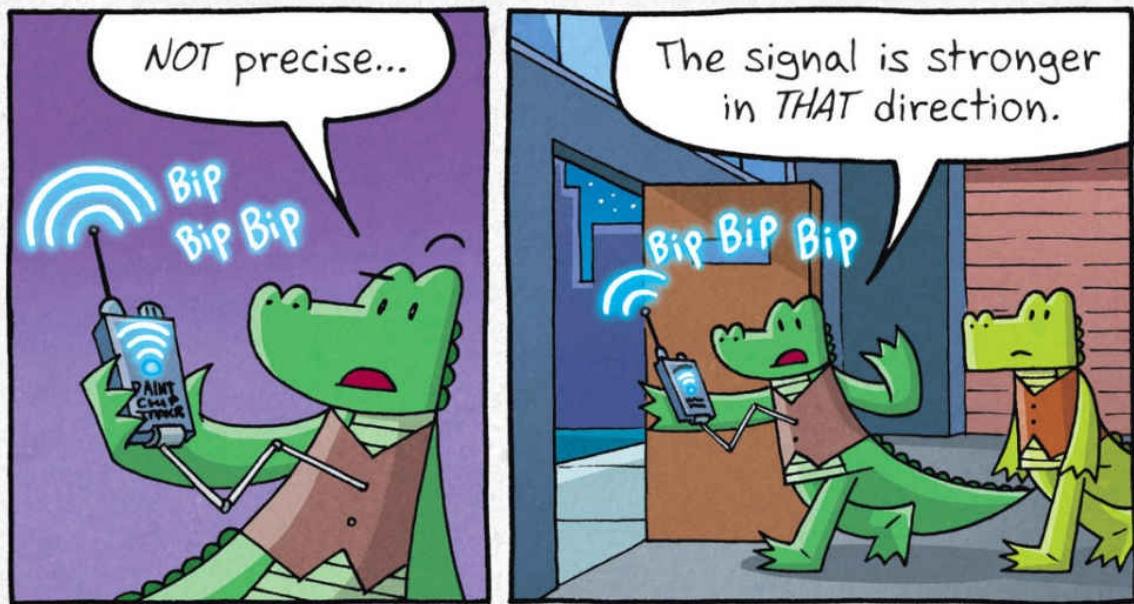
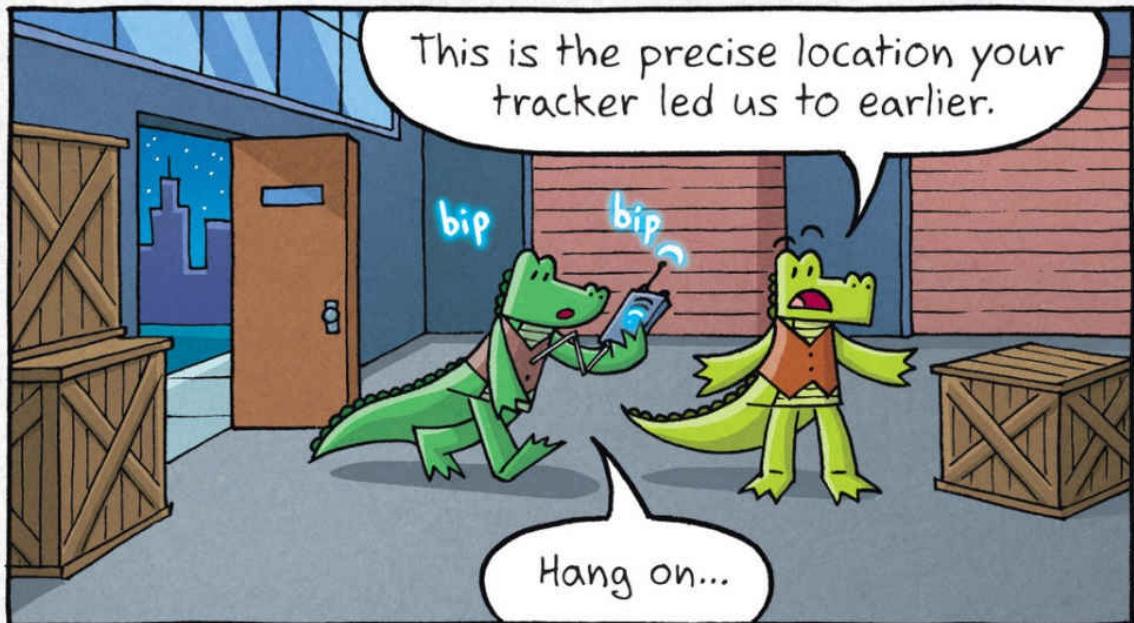
The thief can't have gotten far. It hasn't been that long since the gala.

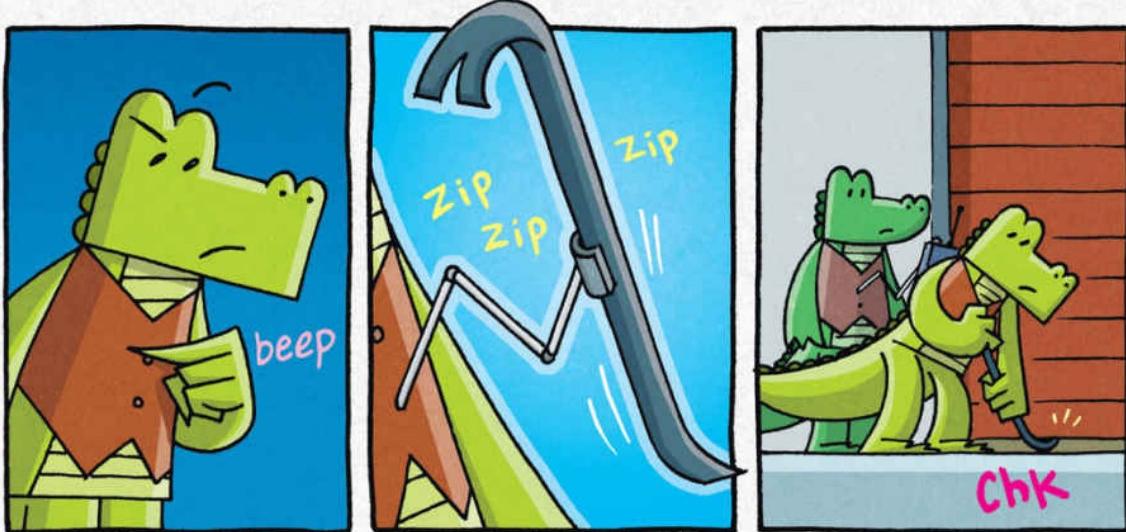




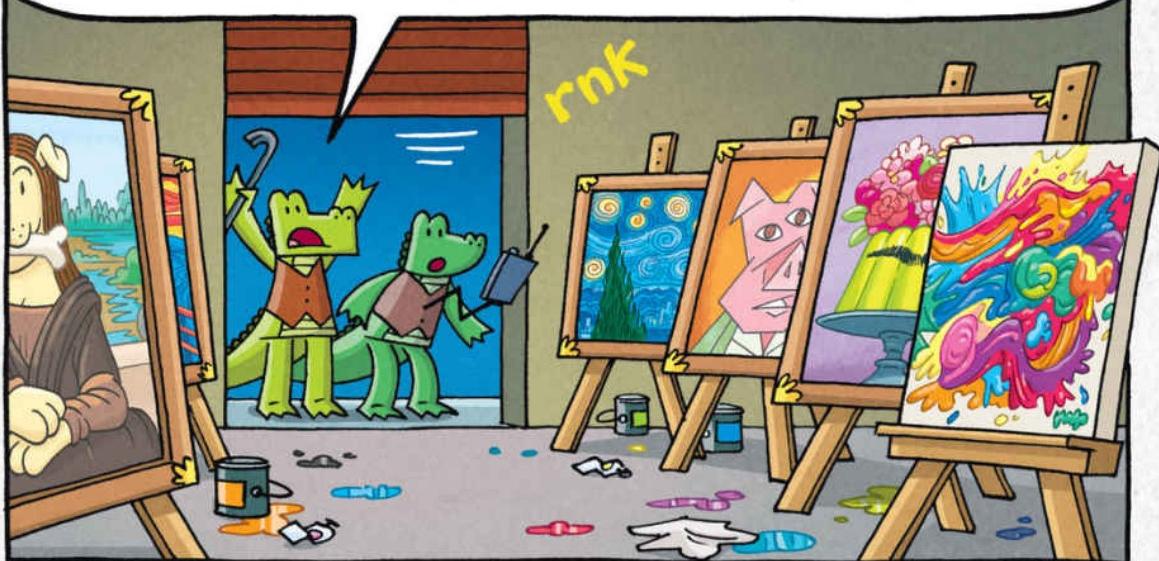
That's because this
is where we found the
paintings last time!







The missing masterpieces! And also your painting!



Let's make
sure it really
is mine... Yup!



Whoever the forger is,
they're good, but they
missed my signature.



Brash! The tracker WASN'T out of alignment when we first found my painting. Because THAT wasn't MY painting. The tracker was pointing to my painting in THIS building the whole time!



So if the REAL art has been in here all along...then the paintings we returned to the museum were the fakes?

♪GASP!♪

The thief WANTED their forgeries to be found!

They painted their copies here, then moved them next door.

This TOO OBVIOUS hiding spot WAS meant to trick whoever showed up into searching the other building.



The copies of the original paintings were made to pull off a **switcheroo**, so the forgeries would get put on display at the gala. Our suspect must be—



Seriously, Mango? This is basic detective stuff!
MMO stands for **M**eans, **M**otive, and **O**portunity.

I knew that.
I just wanted
to see if **YOU**
knew that.

Panksy's an artist. And
a prankster. He probably has
the **MEANS** to create forgeries.

The **curator** insured the
art for millions. Money makes
for a pretty tempting **MOTIVE**.

And the **caterer**
gave everyone food poisoning,
which created the **OPPORTUNITY**
to steal back the forgeries.

So...Were they working together or separately?
Did **ONE** of them do it, or did they **ALL** do it?
And if the thief already **HAS** the real art here...



...**WHY** would they try
to steal **BACK** the
forgeries?



Hmm... To answer that,
we may have to go all the
way back to the
beginning.



Welp, I'll start
flippin' pages...

No, Mango. I mean we need
to forget all we know...or
THINK we know.



Well, we KNOW we have a lot of theories, but we don't have any proof.

Proof...?

THAT'S IT, Mango! The forgeries are PROOF of the crime!

If someone at the gala realized the paintings were copies, the hunt for the originals would be back on again.

They stole back the fakes to get rid of the evidence!

By destroying the forgeries in a fire, the whole world would believe the real art was lost forever in a botched burglary.

Exactamundo.

But they didn't factor in us saving the fake Macaroni. Shame the forger didn't sign it with their OWN name.

Shame they're not here. Then we'd know FOR SURE who did it.

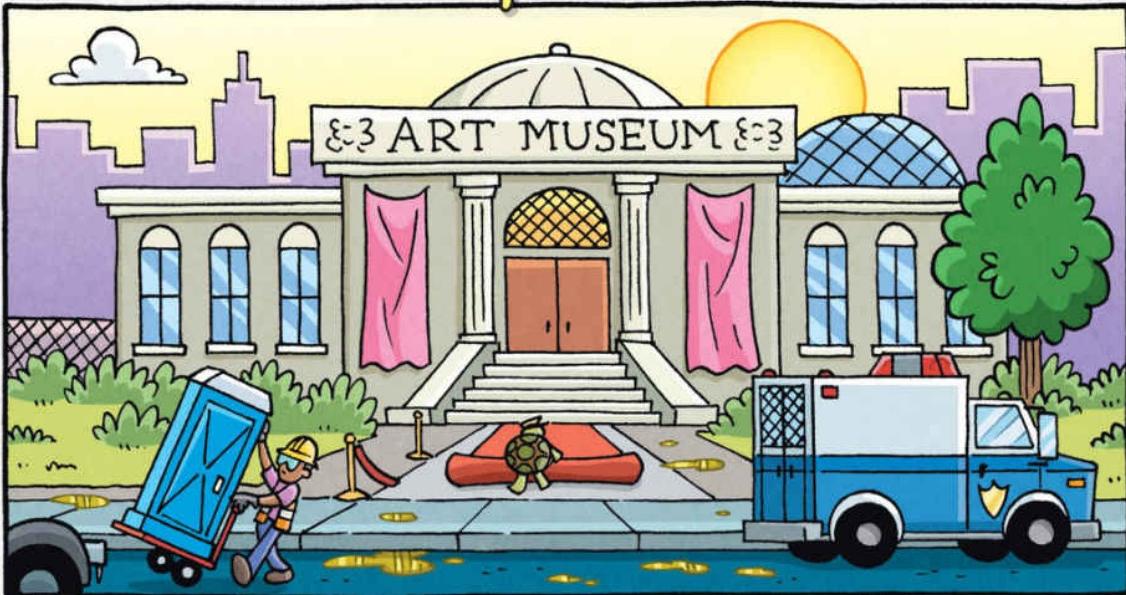
We could wait around and see who shows up?

I've WAITERED enough for one evening! And they may not come back here until they know for certain they got away with the perfect crime.

What if...we can make the thief THINK they got away with it?

BRASH! I've got an AMAZING idea...

Chapter 16



I am Brash, an **InvestiGator** for S.U.I.T.!
You're probably wondering why I invited you all here.



Invited? I work here! I've been here since last night!

Someone stole my catering truck, and no one's offered me a ride home!

And I've got nowhere better to be!



You're here because each of you are **SUSPECTS** in last night's disastrous art heist!



If I did it, I wouldn't hang around the scene of the crime!

Yeah, I'd have skipped town!



EXACTLY! Fleeing would make you look **MORE** guilty. So you stayed to make me think you **DIDN'T** do it!

Preposterous!

Absurd!

Go on.



CURATOR SNOOT! YOU committed the crime so you'd get **MILLIONS** in insurance money to pay off the museum's debts!

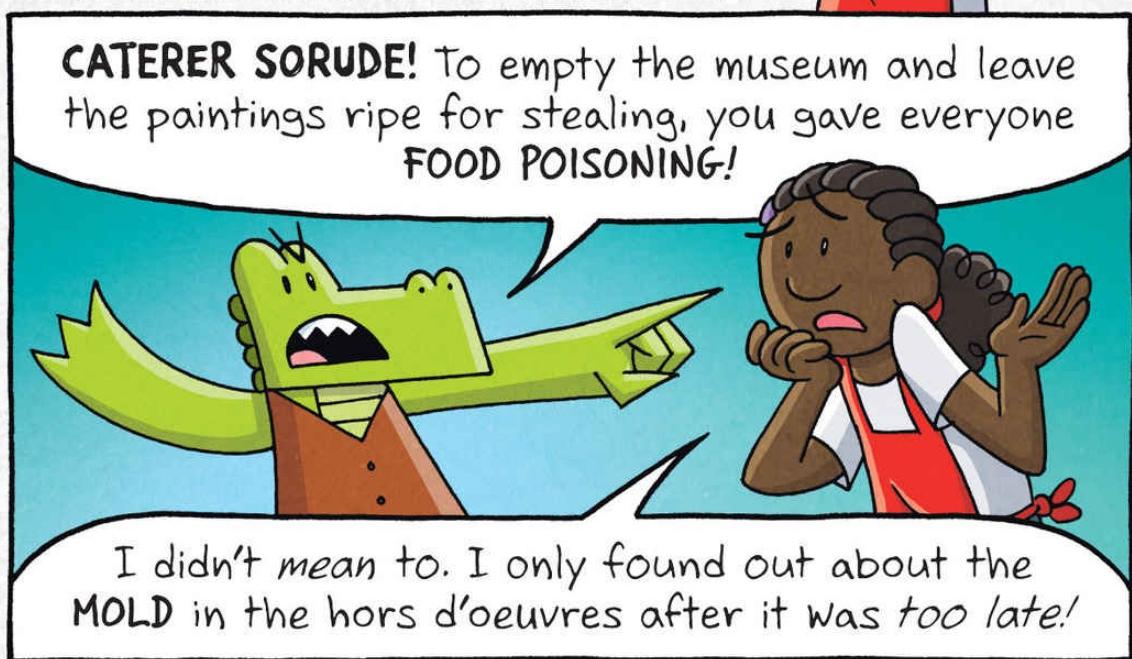
What? NO!
I mean, yes, the museum will get the insurance...



...but no amount of money would be worth ruining the museum's reputation. I'd never be able to throw another gala again. And that's my **favorite part** of running a museum!



No one ever does, and it's **SO RUDE!**

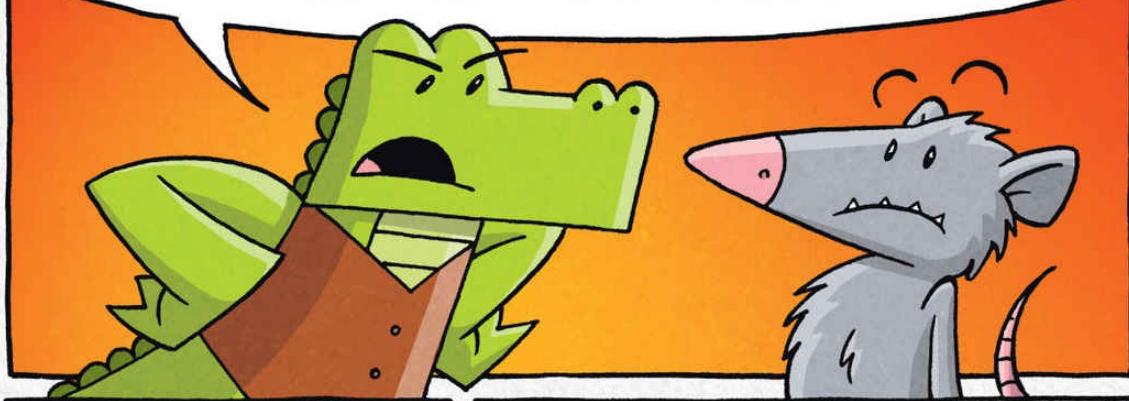


I didn't mean to. I only found out about the **MOLD** in the hors d'oeuvres after it was too late!

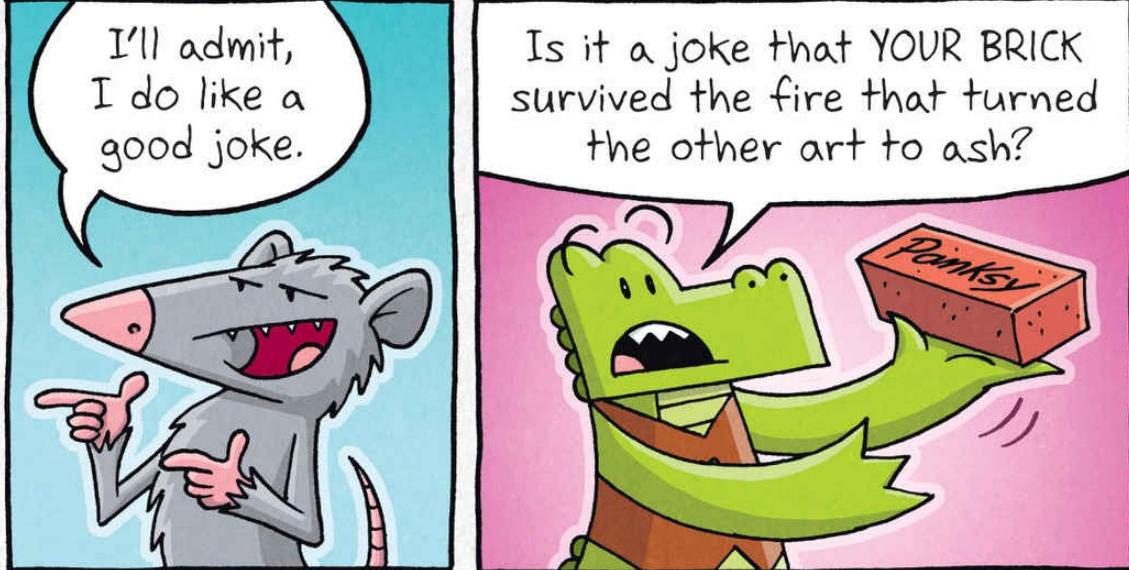
But I had nothing to make them with except **expired ingredients!** Because **SOMEONE** still hasn't paid me for **LAST YEAR'S** gala!



And **PANKSY!** You don't buy into this artsy-fartsy nonsense. You stole the paintings as a **prank** to teach these snobs a lesson!



Is it a joke that **YOUR BRICK** survived the fire that turned the other art to ash?



I'm all for setting the art world on fire,
but not literally! I was framed!



The other art was framed. YOURS was on a PEDESTAL!

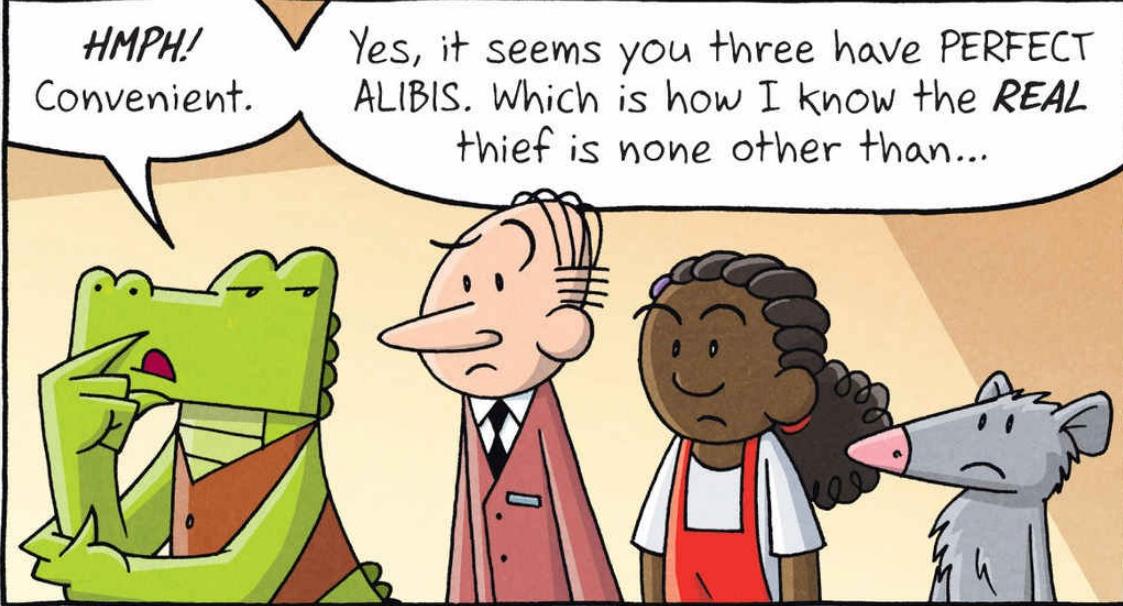
IT'S ALSO suspicious that
you're the only guest who
didn't THROW UP from eating
the hors d'oeuvres.

I'm a possum!
I could eat trash
all day and not
get sick!



HMPH!
Convenient.

Yes, it seems you three have PERFECT
ALIBIS. Which is how I know the REAL
thief is none other than...



...MACARONI ANCHEESE!

Buh-WHAAAA???



Macaroni stole the paintings the **FIRST** time just so that he'd get invited to have his work displayed at the gala!

Nuh-uh!



That's right!
Macaroni was
a last-minute
fill-in artist!



Macaroni was the first one to throw up. He got sick on purpose!

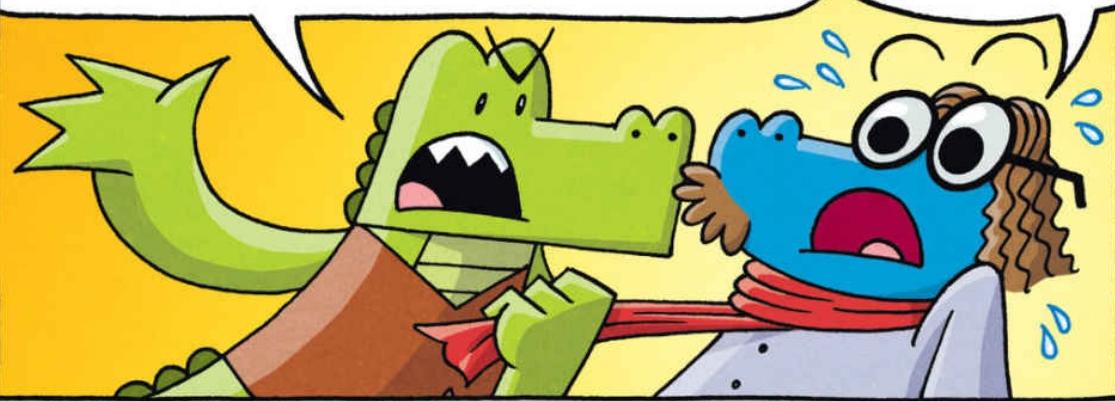
Did somebody say "porpoise"?

Er...



You didn't want to share the spotlight, so you **BARFED** all over the "Bona Lisa" so everyone would leave the museum.

I couldn't help it! I overate!



Like many artists, I don't know how to socialize at gatherings. I eat the whole time to avoid conversation!



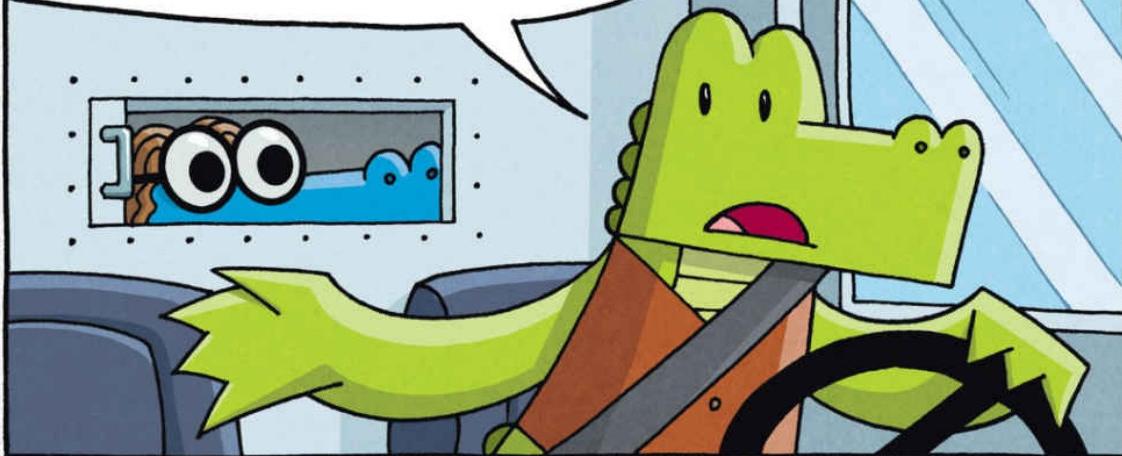
Macaroni was also seen running **BACK** into the museum shortly after it was evacuated!

Well, that *IS* true...

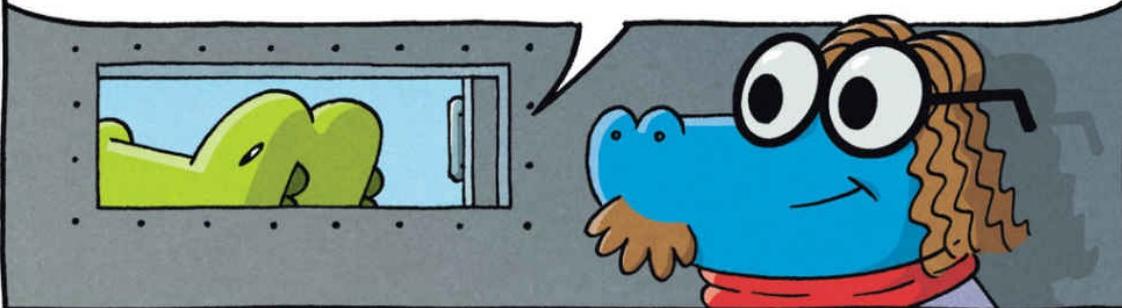




The actual thief or thieves will of course **KNOW** that Macaroni Ancheese is **innocent**.



But hopefully we've convinced them that I believe Macaroni did it. And now that Macaroni is going straight to jail, the **real criminal** is sure to think it's safe for them to go back to the storage unit.



And we'll be there to catch them **RED-HANDED!**

Or whatever color paint may be on them from making **forgeries**.



Chapter 17



She's technically NOT a jungle cat, Mango.
But only a **CHEETAH** could be fast enough to—

Wow, she IS fast!

ZIP



Huh? A dead end?



Wh-what is this, a *maze*!?

Léon n'est pas une pipe



You may have tricked everyone into thinking these paintings burned up in that fire...

But we know you won't claw your way through the *ACTUAL* originals!



They're right! Which way? WHICH WAY?!

There's the exit!



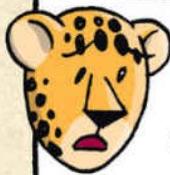
ESCAPE!



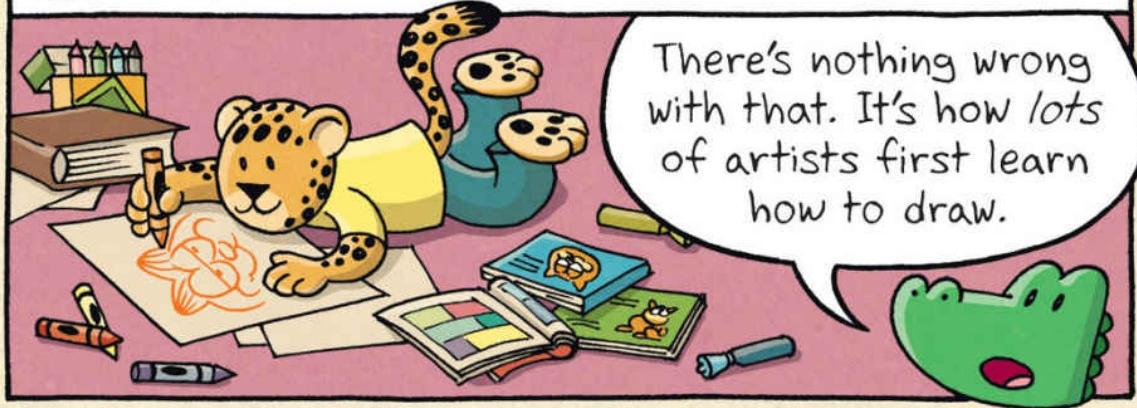
BONK







I've loved art ever since I was a little kid. I'd spend my time admiring it, studying it, and copying other people's illustrations that I liked.



There's nothing wrong with that. It's how lots of artists first learn how to draw.



I went to art school, and as other students found their artistic voices, what I was best at was quickly mimicking everyone else's styles.

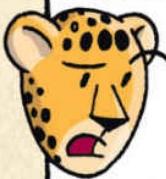


Imitation is the sincerest form of flattery, but the school still kicked me out!



Eventually, I got a job at the museum.





I've spent years looking at paintings. I mean, **REALLY** looking. Every **detail**, every **brushstroke**. No one appreciated them as much as I did!



So when the **most famous paintings in history** were coming to the museum for the gala, I was certain that if I painted copies and swapped them with the originals, no one would even notice.



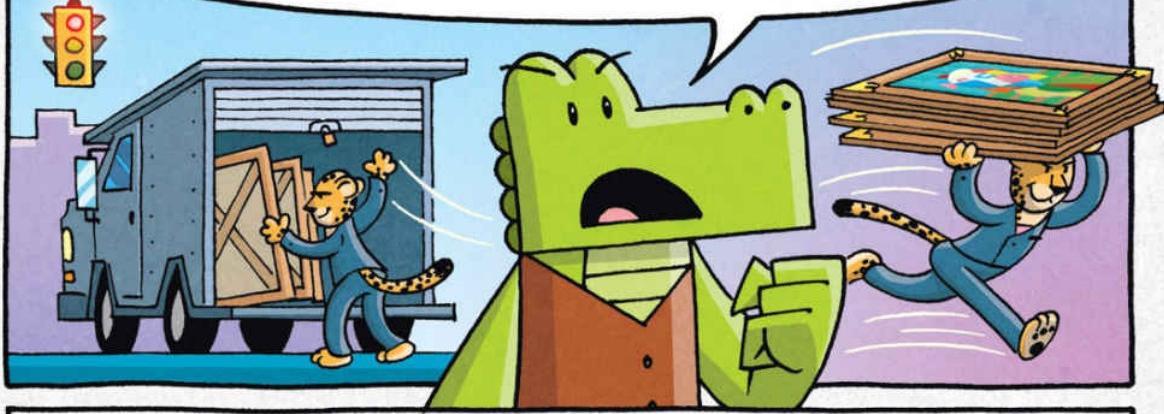
I could keep the originals all to myself, and after the gala, **MY** art would be returned to museums all over the world for people to casually glance at.

You had the **MEANS**, the **OPPORTUNITY**,
and the **MOTIVE** to commit the crime!

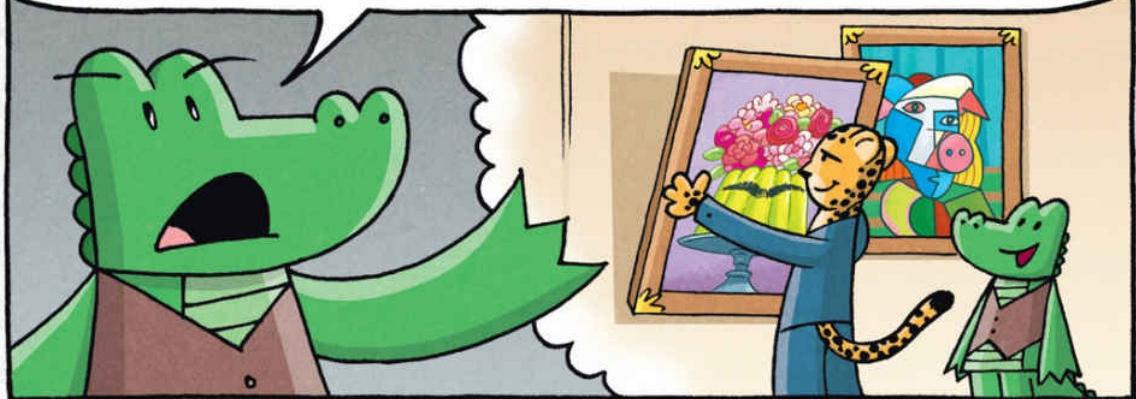
Brash,
that spells
MOM.



You were fast enough to steal the paintings from the armored car without the security guards even knowing... You had the skills, time, and **SPEED** to create the forgeries... And you have your own selfish reason for doing it!



And with us helpfully finding your fakes and bringing them to the museum, your plan worked flawlessly!



Except you realized your forgeries WEREN'T perfect.
So **YOU** poisoned the hors d'oeuvres because you
were afraid someone was going to catch a mistake.

No! HONEST!



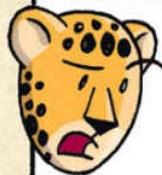
I **WANTED** people to **LOOK** at my art. Not **THROW UP**
on it. When everyone got sick, my plan was ruined!
My forgery skills can hold up to scrutiny, but the
paint can't hold up to **STOMACH ACID**.



So that's when you decided to
evacuate the museum, destroy
the evidence, and frame Panksy!

That was
an accident!
Mostly...





With the museum emptied, I thought I could sneak out my copies and repaint them. On the way out, I saw Panksy's ridiculous brick.



Before I had a chance to lock the back of the armored car, the brick fell onto the gas pedal!



I never intended to DESTROY my paintings. But if everyone believed the real ones were lost in a fire, at least I could still keep them all to myself.



I knew it would eventually come out that Macaroni Ancheese was **innocent**. But I figured I had time to paint new forgeries and hatch another plan to pass them off as the genuine articles.





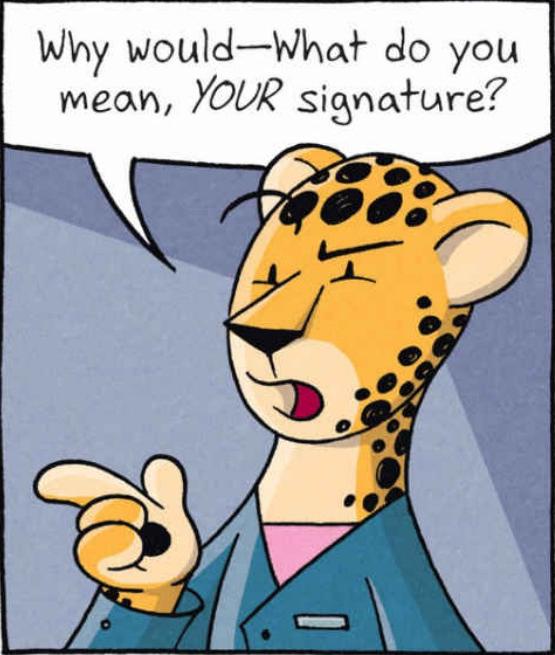
If I can paint just like the best artists in the world, then that makes **ME** the best artist in the world!



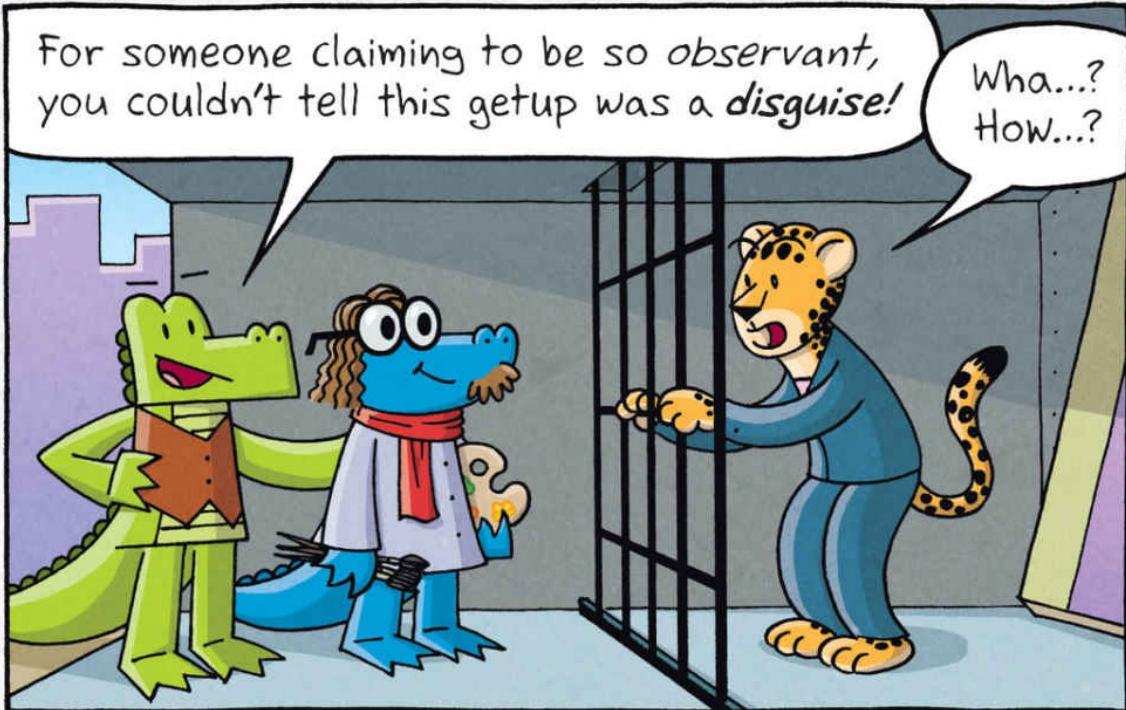
That's why I stole that Macaroni painting. I made an **EXACT COPY**, showed it to his face at the gala, and he **STILL** didn't notice it was a forgery!



It was *NOT* an exact copy! You didn't notice my **signature**.



Why would—What do you mean, **YOUR** signature?



I'm an **ALLIGATOR**, not a **FROG!**

She said
"fraud."

Oh. It's hard to
hear in these
glasses.

Savanna, you may think people don't appreciate art as much as you. But if that were true, some artist, I don't know his name, wouldn't have drawn this book we're in.

BURP

And someone **ELSE**
wouldn't be reading
it right now.

Hi!

We're...in a **book**?
I'm...just a **drawing**??

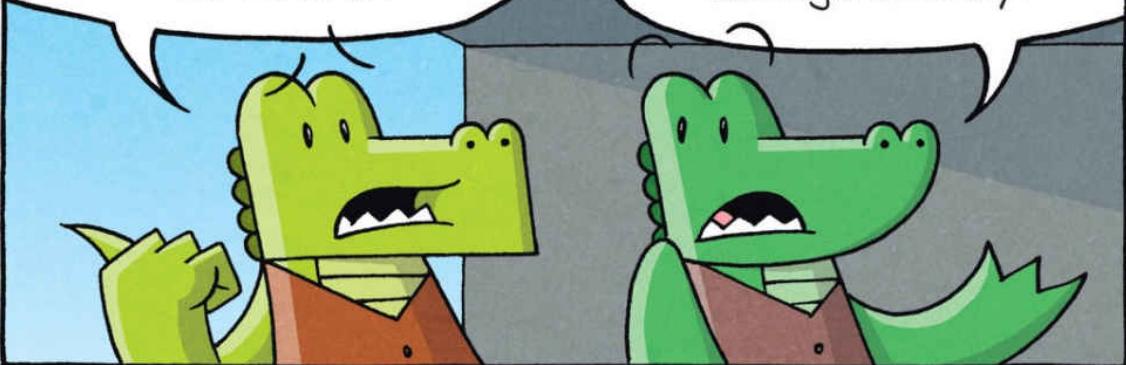
So my paintings of other paintings are just drawings that someone else DREW???

I DON'T KNOW WHAT'S REAL ANYMORE!



Uh... Let's get out of here before the author finds a way to break a **FIFTH** wall.

Yeah, that'll just set Savanna loose. And her grip on reality is loose enough already!



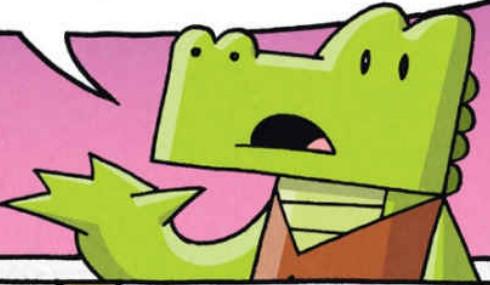
All thanks to the **InvestiGators**!



I wouldn't pat myself on the back for THAT, Mango.

Yes, we've recovered the art and caught the culprit. But though Savanna has committed crimes, she's certainly not EVIL. Copying the art isn't where she went wrong. It was her **belief** that there is only one definition of art, one criteria to judge an artist by, and only one way to **appreciate** art.

Hopefully with some help, Savanna can come to realize she was **mistaken**.



Speaking of which, we need to be takin' these paintings to the museum again.

For the **FIRST** time, technically.



Whaddya say... skip ahead?

Skip ahead.

But **NO COW DETOURS!**



Chapter 18

The **COPYCAT** is in the bag! And by *BAG* I mean *JAIL*. This **cheetah** turned out to be a **CHEATER** who tried to replace historical masterpieces with her own imitations.



For more, here's Vohnda Featherneck with the museum curator, Thelonious Snort.



Yes, Cici. The priceless art is back and the museum's reputation is intact. In fact, all this excitement has generated a renewed interest in the art world.



The exhibit will be extended and opened to the public **free of charge**, since **NO ONE** got to see the actual paintings anyway. And thanks to **Councilman Fluffles**, the city has fully funded the museum's budget...



...in exchange for the museum dedicating a wing to **serious balloon art**!

All the museum's expenses will be paid. Including the hospital bills for everyone who got food poisoning!

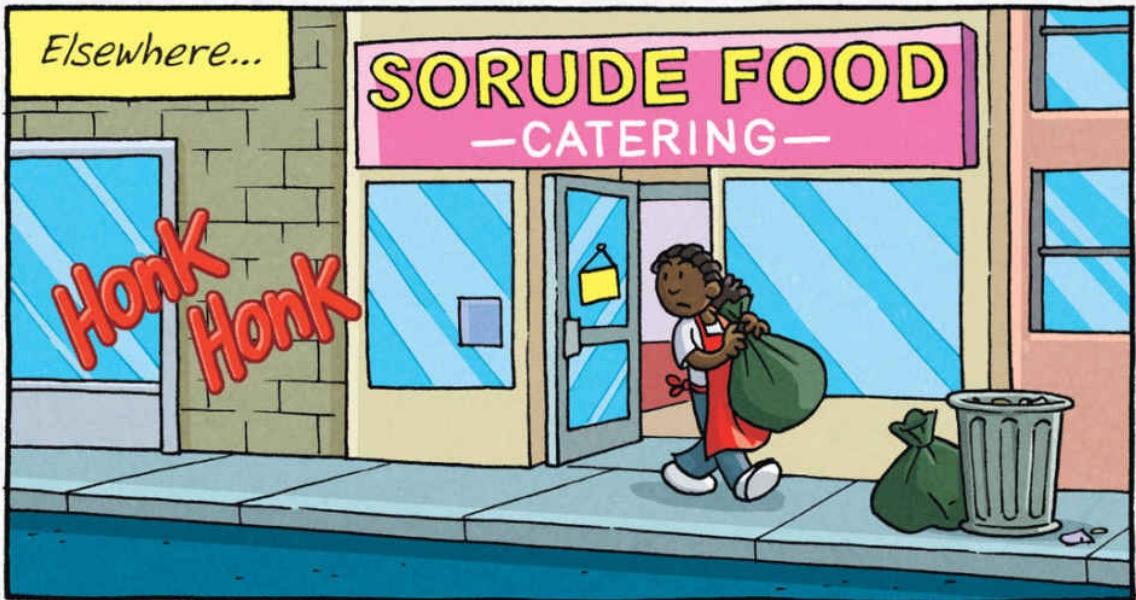


Well, let's hope everyone runs TO the museum and doesn't GET the runs AT the museum. Back to you, Cici!

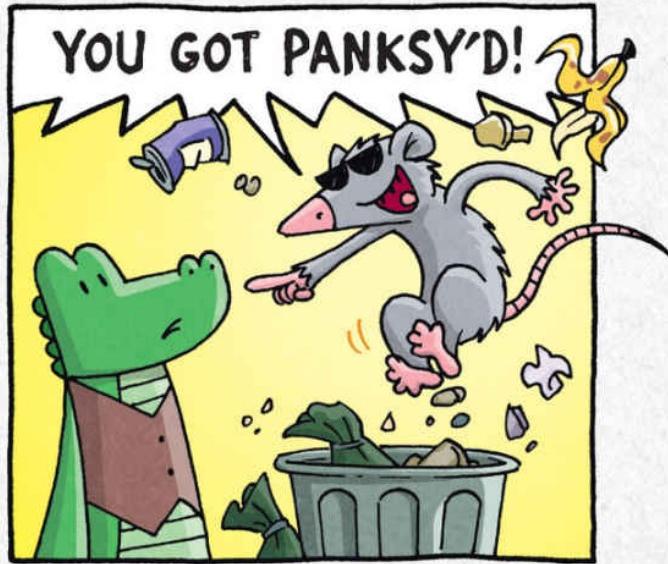


Thanks for painting **THAT** picture for me, Vohnda.

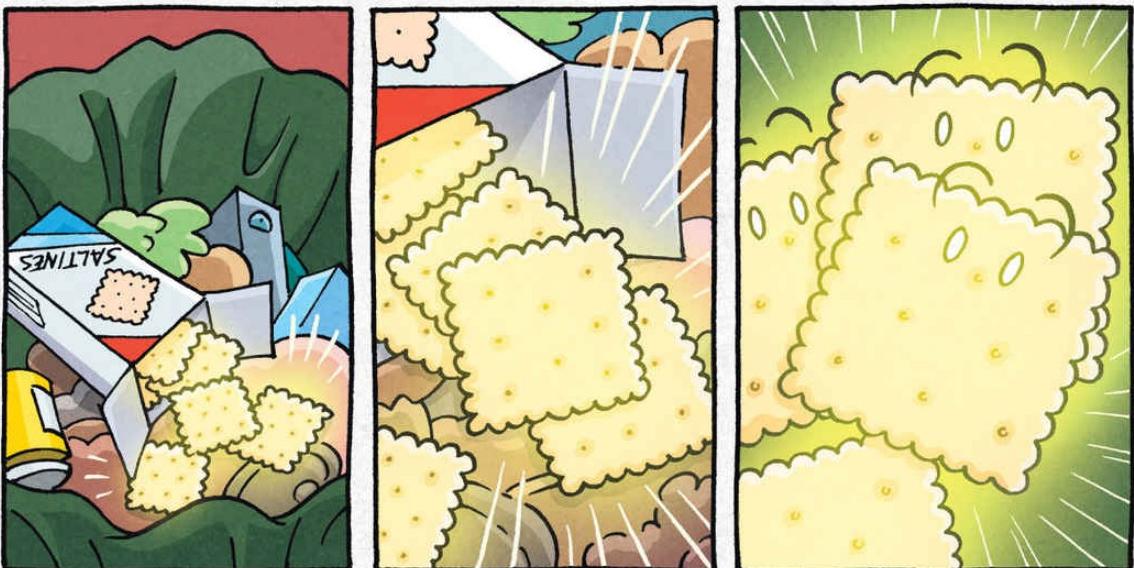












Epilogue

Later...



General Inspector! Isn't it impressive to see my *REAL* painting on display in the museum, surrounded by all this culture?



Hmm. I feel bad saying this, Mango...
but I think I prefer the forgery!

WHAT?! But it's just
a COPY of mine!



Beauty is in the EYE of
the beholder, Mango.



And I'll be holdin' on
to the one hanging
in my office!



Wait, YOU'RE the artist who painted that?
So was Macaroni Ancheese an imposter?

An impASTA!



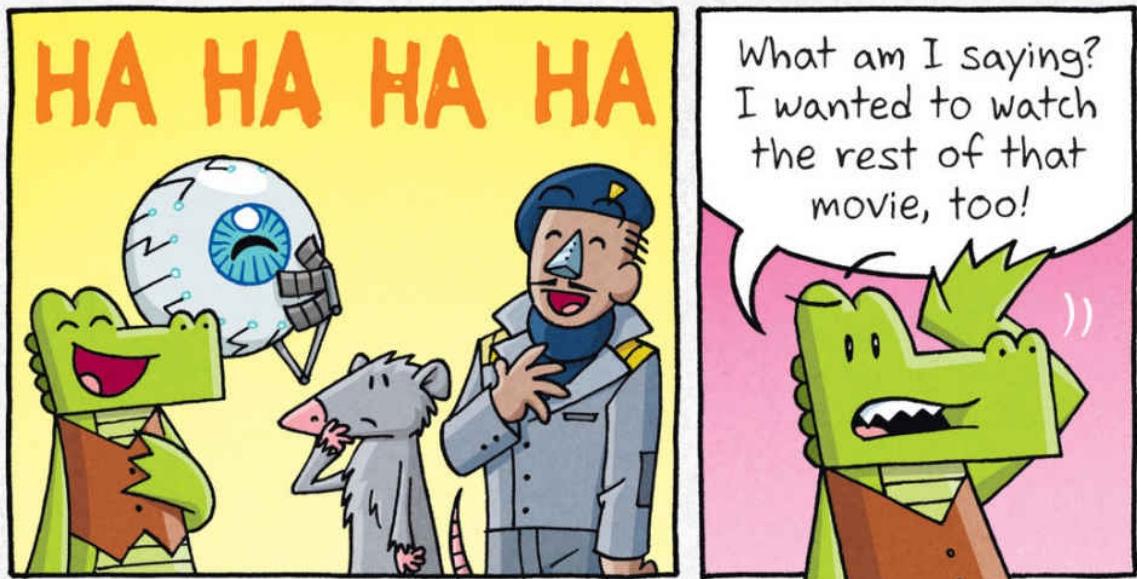
I was UNDERCOVER to catch the art thief. I'm an **AGENT of S.U.I.T.!**

Wow! Now THAT'S what I call *performance art!*

It's just like the end of **COLE'S LAW: THE MOVIE**, when Detective Cole joins Agents of S.A.L.A.D.: Super Awesome Lettuce And Disguises.

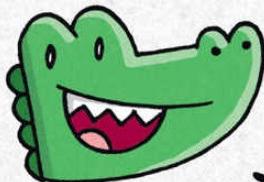
THAT'S IT!

IF YOU NEED ME,
I'LL BE AT THE MOVIES!

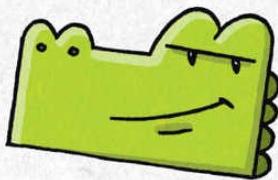


INVESTIGATORS

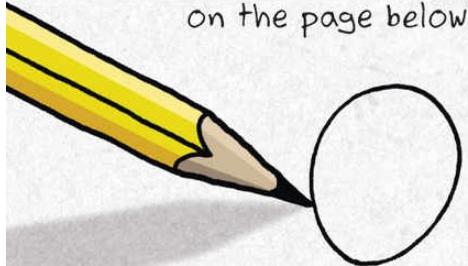
How to draw the COPYCAT



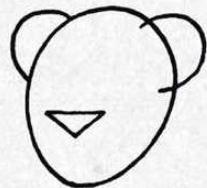
And remember:
Copying is how many
artists first learn
how to draw!



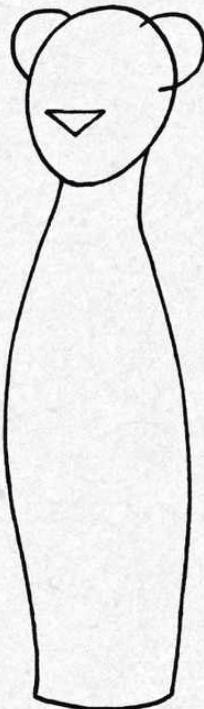
1. Start with an upside-down egg shape, with the narrower part by her chin. Leave plenty of room on the page below for her body.



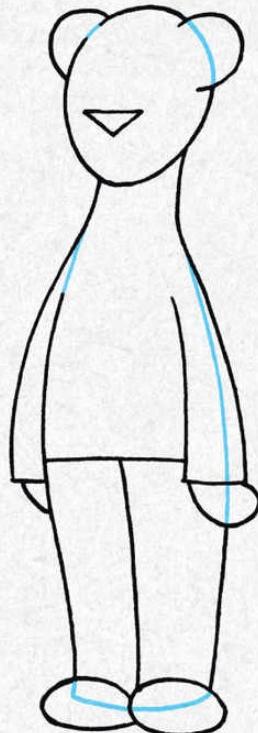
2. Draw half-circles on each side for ears and a triangle for her nose.



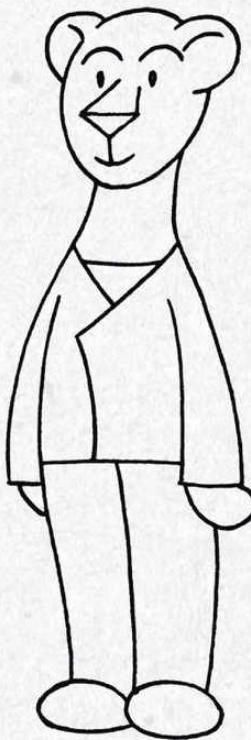
3. Draw a shape similar to a bowling pin or a soda bottle for her body.



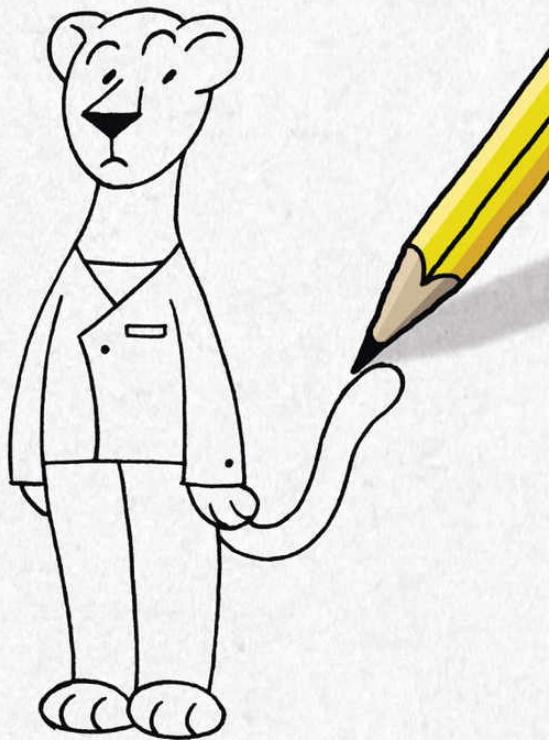
4. Add arms and legs, plus hands and feet. Erase any unnecessary lines.



5. Draw facial features like eyes and a mouth, and her jacket and blouse.



6. Give her fingers and toes, and clothing details. Don't forget her tail!



7. This cheetah's not complete without her spots! Add some color to make your drawings really come alive.



8. Lastly, **ERASE HER BEFORE SHE ESCAPES!**



Hey, I haven't seen or heard **Cilantro** at all in this whole book!

Well, chameleons ARE hard to see. But in Cilantro's case...

...she's off on her *OWN* case! In the new series, **Agents of S.U.I.T.!**

Ooh!
I can't wait
to read it!

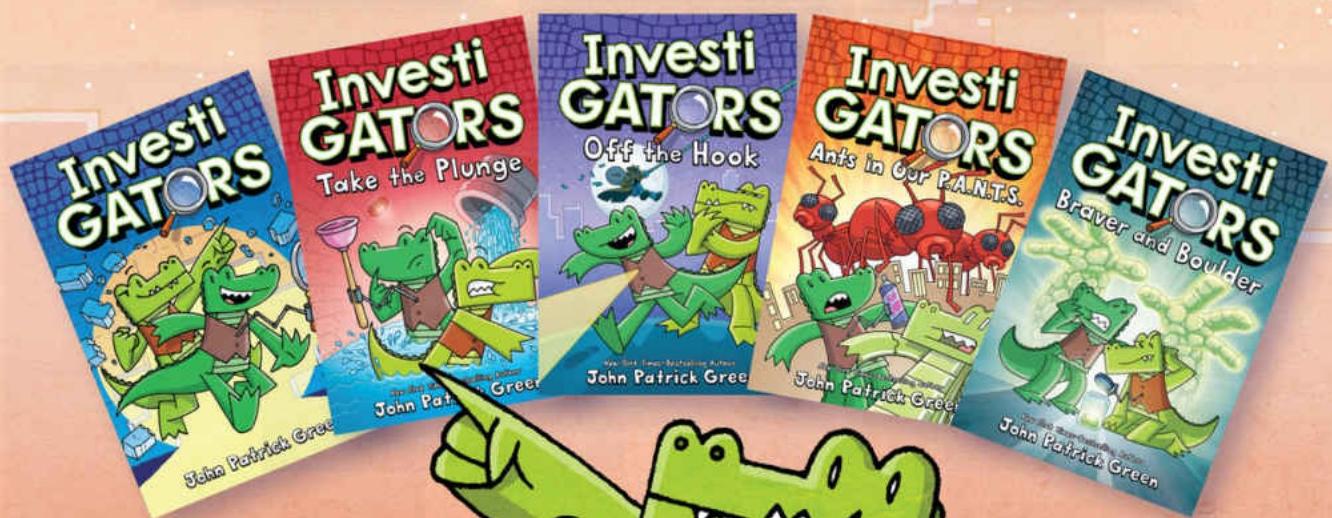
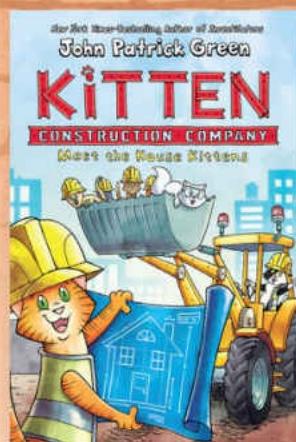
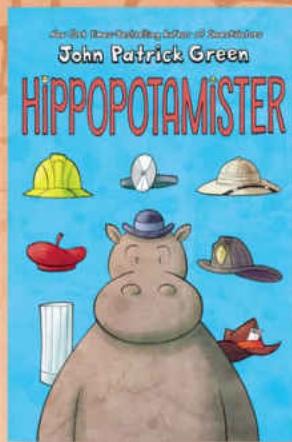
InvestiGators presents
Agents of S.U.I.T.

FIELD AGENT
Cilantro
SUIT
New York Times—Bestselling Author
John Patrick Green
with Christopher Hastings and Pat Lewis

Mango and Brash will return in their next book, *All Tide Up!*

For the latest in Gator news, activities, and more, visit
InvestiGatorsBooks.com

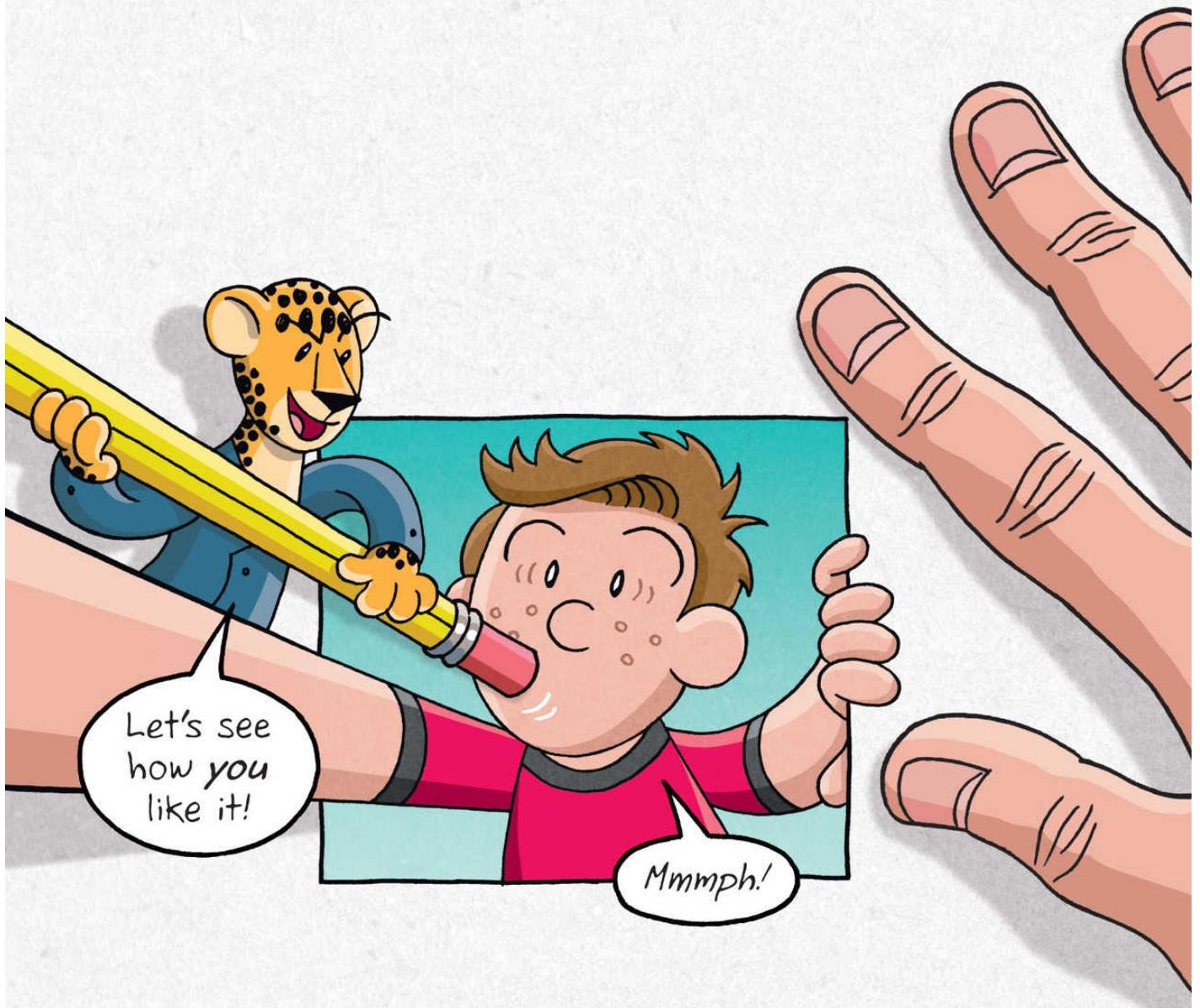
Read the John Patrick Green Collection!



:01

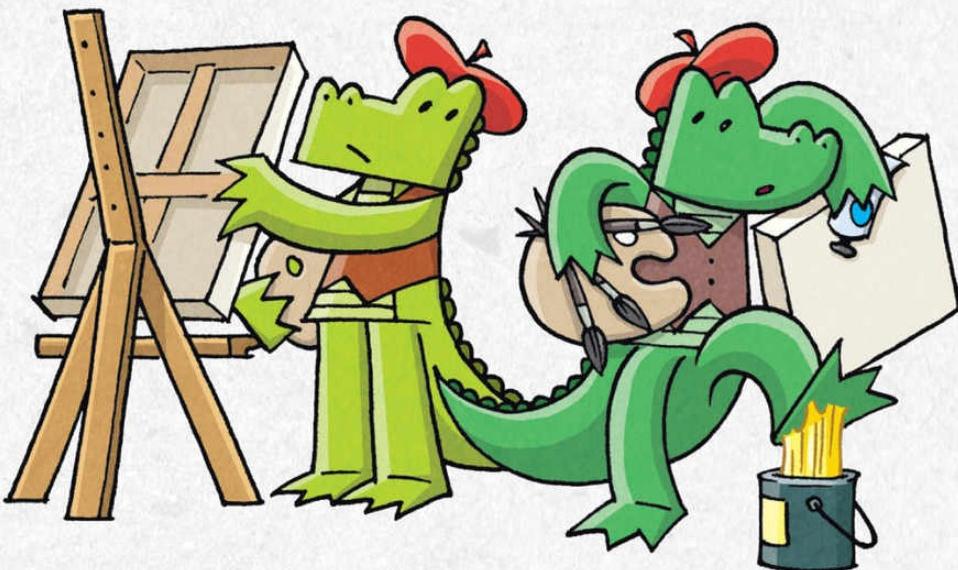
First Second

firstsecondbooks.com



Investi GATORS

Heist and Seek



written and illustrated by
John Patrick Green

with color by Wes Dzioba

:01

First Second
New York

Praise for *InvestiGATORS*

"A sugar rush manifested as a graphic novel."

—Kirkus Reviews

The *InvestiGATORS* CANVAS the city for a thief...

Uh...maybe flushing ourselves into the sewer isn't the best way to get around town this time...

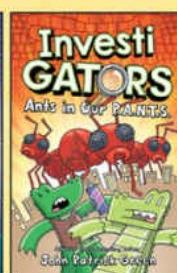
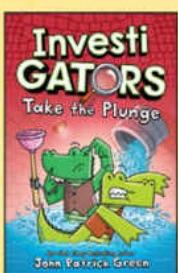


...who has truly mastered the ART of crime!



Have Mango and Brash PAINTED themselves into a corner?

THE WHOLE SERIES IS
A WORK OF
ART!



Cover art © 2022 by John Patrick Green

Cover design by John Patrick Green and Molly Johanson



First Second
New York